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General Assembly

Seventy-third session

Official Records

10th plenary meeting
Thursday, 27 September 2018, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Korneliou (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Address by Ms. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Ms. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Grybauskaitė: This November the world will commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War. The war caused the fall of empires and opened a window for small nations in Europe, including Lithuania, to achieve their dreams of living independently and freely, enjoying their culture and traditions.

To prevent such a war from ever happening again, multilateral institutions were created to safeguard political independence and territorial integrity. Yet when the world faced its next big crisis, those institutions failed to act and remained powerless bystanders as humankind plunged into another world war.

Today we would like to think that our multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, are strong enough to take a stand against aggression and a disregard of international rules. But sometimes reality tells a different story. We see a world that is more fractured, with institutions that are crumbling, instead of one that is sheltering us from the use of force and from economic storms. In almost every major crisis of the past decade, from Syria to Ukraine and from Myanmar to Yemen, the Security Council has been unable to play a meaningful role because of the inability of States to rise above their national interests and because of the obstructive use of the veto power.

Organizations created to abolish weapons of mass destruction are toothless against dictators who develop nuclear arms and use chemical weapons on civilians. As the tide begins to turn for the global economy, the World Trade Organization is starting to face paralysis. Rising global tensions in trade could wipe away our achievements in sustainable development and poverty reduction.

We must therefore recognize that our institutions are not perfect. They can be bureaucratic, wasteful and unaccountable. But it was us, the Member States, that created them, and so it is up to us alone to improve and adapt them to new realities. Before we seek to destroy multilateral institutions, commitments or agreements, we must have a clear vision of what we want to build

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instead. Otherwise we will end up living on a pile of ruins.

We cannot reject globalization, because fighting it will only make us poorer. Over the past 25 years, free trade has given more than 1 billion people an opportunity to escape extreme poverty. However, globalization also has a dark side, which must be confronted by acting against exclusion, inequality and falling labour standards. We cannot let the voices of nationalism and division win over dialogue and cooperation. On all major challenges — terrorism, climate change and female empowerment — there is simply no alternative to working together.

So far we have been too quiet, too passive and too ignorant. We must stop taking the easy way out, blaming institutions for our own political or domestic failures. We must recognize that we, the Member States, have the power and resources to enable the United Nations to stand up for peace, freedom, equality and humankind, because we are the United Nations. Let us take this opportunity and assume responsibility for our future, empowering the United Nations to act.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Masisi: It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to address the General Assembly for the first time in my capacity as the President of the Republic of Botswana, after assuming office on 1 April. I succeeded our former President Lieutenant General Seretsê Khama Ian Khama, who retired at the end of his term in office. It was the fifth time that Botswana has witnessed a smooth transfer of power since its independence, in 1966.

Allow me to join other delegations in paying tribute to the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, who passed away on 18 August. Mr. Annan will be remembered as an international statesman and an icon who devoted his entire life to serving humankind.

Let me also join other delegations in congratulating Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Her election is particularly noteworthy as this is only the fourth time a woman has held the position since the founding of our world body, 73 years ago, and she is the first woman to do so from the Latin American and Caribbean region. I would like to assure her of the full support and cooperation of my delegation as she discharges her mandate, and we wish her every success.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, who competently presided over the deliberations of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

I also wish to thank our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his outstanding leadership and stewardship of the United Nations. I want especially to commend him for the reforms that he has initiated, which are aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Organization.

My delegation welcomes the theme of the general debate of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". We are particularly pleased to note that it builds on last year's theme, which also focused on people and emphasized the nexus between peace and a decent life for everyone on the planet. That shows the steadfast commitment of the United Nations to ensuring sustainable development for all. Clearly, the principle of leaving no one behind should remain our long-term aspiration. It is a clarion call for us to end extreme poverty and ensure the provision of quality education, health care, infrastructure, housing and employment for all.

I am pleased that the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018* indicates that there are more people living healthier lives today than there were a decade ago. However, we should be reminded that much more still needs to be done to achieve prosperity for all, especially in view of the fact that an estimated 783 million people live in extreme poverty, 2.3 billion still lack access to basic levels of sanitation services and 4 billion are without social protection.

It is therefore apparent that none of us, whether big or small, can overcome those gigantic development challenges alone. Consequently, we need to act together to strengthen multilateralism and honour and implement the commitments made by the General Assembly and global partnerships for sustainable development.

It is also imperative that the global community continue to support individual countries, taking into account their unique development challenges. For instance, while Botswana is classified as an upper-middle-income country, it is still dealing with many development challenges comparable to those of less-developed countries. However, we are reassured by the words the Secretary-General used when he said that the United Nations

> "stands ready to work with all Member States to make the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for everyone, everywhere".

In view of the development challenges facing my country, I want to reiterate our appeal for continued support in human capital, infrastructure and capacity development for the private sector and technology transfer.

On sustainable development, Botswana reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Accordingly, we have aligned our national Vision 2036 with that global Agenda. At the regional level, we are also pleased that the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Southern African Development Community's integration agenda are also aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

What those development agendas have in common is that they are aimed at eradicating poverty and creating inclusive, prosperous and peaceful societies. In that respect, we are pleased to note that extreme poverty continues to decline across the globe, even though we still have a long way to go, given that 35 per cent of Africa's population — 395 million people — still live in abject poverty.

As we begin the third year of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, my Government remains steadfast in its resolve to improve the material and social well-being of Botswana's population. Our national development agenda places "people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership" at the heart of sustainable development. In that regard, our national Vision 2036 is anchored to four pillars: sustainable economic development; human and social development; sustainable environment; and governance, peace and security.

In addition, we have six national priorities that are aligned with our national Vision pillars — developing diversified sources of economic growth, human capital development and social development, the sustainable use of national resources, the consolidation of good governance, strengthening national security and the implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system. With those in mind, our sustainable development pathway strikes a balance among the social, human, economic, environmental and governance dimensions.

The implementation of our national Vision 2036 and the eleventh national development plan is underpinned by a robust monitoring and evaluation system to ensure the effective delivery of these programmes' goals and aspirations. Additionally, we have established a national steering committee to effectively coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We have also developed Botswana's SDGs road map, which is a guide for the achievement of the goals contained within the SDGs, covering the period from 2017 to 2036.

My Government has adopted a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. It aims to ensure broad ownership and leadership at the local, community and national levels and to break down silos across the development spectrum by forging strategic partnerships among the Government, academia, civil society organizations, community-based organizations, development partners, the private sector, non-State actors and the United Nations system. In pursuit of those goals and aspirations, we have given priority to economic diversification, sustainable economic growth, employment creation and investment

in human capital with a view to building a prosperous and inclusive society.

In particular, the focus is on our young people, who constitute 60 per cent of the population of Botswana. In that regard, our ultimate goal is to attain universal access to pre-primary, primary and secondary education. We are also expanding access to tertiary, technical and vocational education and training. In addition, we are developing a national employment policy, the objective of which is to assist Botswana in reaching gainful and productive employment and decent work for all. Above all, the Government of Botswana has developed several policies, programmes and strategies, such as our economic diversification drive initiative, our citizen economic empowerment policy, youth empowerment scheme and youth development fund, to support sustainable economic development and employment creation.

To ensure that development benefits all, my Government continues to make substantial investments in the provision of health care, decent housing and shelter through interventions such as the Treat All Strategy, preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, a self-help housing agency and a programme to house the destitute. Additionally, the Government provides social protection to such vulnerable groups as children, young persons, the elderly and persons living with disabilities through a policy addressing out-of-school children, the orphan-care programme and the old-age pension scheme. Other development interventions aimed at increasing access to economic and social opportunities include poverty eradication, women and youth empowerment, and a national policy on gender and development.

Furthermore, we are giving priority to investments in research and development, science, technology and innovation in order to transform Botswana into a high-income-status nation and knowledge-based economy. Investment in information and communications technology is undertaken to promote growth and economic diversification and to support e-Government services and innovation in the economy.

We note that the implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development faces immense constraints in terms of resources and capacity. In that respect, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations to address those challenges through the adoption of resolution 72/279, on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, in May 2018. The resolution is vital in that it aims at supporting countries in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is our firm conviction that strengthened United Nations country teams and reinvigorated Resident Coordinator systems will contribute significantly to the achievement of the SDGs.

Botswana also welcomes the signing of the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure the effective coordination, execution and monitoring of those two instruments as well as reporting on them. That coordination will hopefully ensure that there is no duplication of effort, thereby allowing for the effective use of our already limited resources.

On human rights, Botswana remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law, which are critical to sustainable development, prosperity and peaceful societies. In that regard, we continue to support efforts aimed at fighting impunity and at implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect populations from such atrocities as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Accordingly, we reaffirm our full support for the Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC achieved a milestone this year when it commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, which founded the Court. Since its establishment, in 2002, the International Criminal Court has contributed significantly to the strengthening of the international criminal justice system through its prosecution of grave international crimes.

On international peace and security, Botswana remains deeply concerned about the protracted conflicts in Afghanistan, Mali, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. It is estimated that over the past decade, violent conflicts have led to the forced displacement of over 68.5 million people. Studies show that conflicts contribute to increases in slums, hunger and food insecurity, thereby worsening humanitarian crises. We therefore urge all parties to those conflicts to uphold their obligation to protect civilians and humanitarian personnel, in accordance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We also want to stress that dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflicts are critical to the maintenance of international peace and security.

We want to commend the Secretary-General for initiating reforms of the peace and security pillar aimed at strengthening United Nations capacities in conflict prevention and resolution, mediation, peacekeeping, peacemaking, post-conflict reconstruction and development, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. To bolster international peacemaking efforts, African leaders have committed themselves to funding 25 per cent of peace support operations in Africa by 2021 and to silencing the guns by 2020. I therefore want to applaud regional organizations for their commitment to that noble cause.

With regard to corruption, as a global community we need to address the problems of illicit financial flows, money-laundering and corruption, which are haemorrhaging the resources needed to implement the SDGs. Among other things, SDG 16 calls for a substantial reduction of corruption and bribery in all their forms, strengthening the recovery and return of stolen assets and developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

In conclusion, I want to reaffirm Botswana's commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our actions should be bold and transformative as we build a better future for our nations and succeeding generations. We should stand firm behind our mantra of leaving no one behind. Let us not be hesitant in demonstrating global leadership, collective responsibility and collaborative partnerships involving all countries and peoples of the world. The future is truly in our hands.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Botswana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Anastasiades: At the outset, allow me to congratulate the newly elected President of the General Assembly, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, and to assure her of my Government's unwavering support in her mission to lead the Assembly at its seventy-third session.

I would also like to pay tribute to the memory of the late former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, with his charismatic and measured approach, redefined the Organization and actively championed the ideals that characterized his ethos: peacemaking and peacekeeping, international cooperation and sustainable development.

In addition, by honouring the centenary of the birth of the great statesman and world leader, Nelson Mandela, we have expressed our great admiration and gratitude for his active promotion of the noble values of peace, justice and equality.

Cyprus fully endorses the theme chosen for this year's session of the General Assembly, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". We fully subscribe to the theme, in line, of course, with the vast majority of States Members of the United Nations, since the essence of the theme reminds us of the founding principles of the Organization, in which millions of people and many countries have vested their hopes for a better future. The Organization emerged from the ashes of war for the purposes of maintaining international peace and security and respecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, irrespective of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief.

The order it proposes is based on multilateralism, collective action and international cooperation among States with sovereign equality. However, one might consider thinking that we have failed to uphold those values by asking how it is that we come back again and again, year after year, as a kind of ritual, to attest to the dismal lack of effectiveness for some and the attempts at embellishment of others for what is in fact our inability to fulfil the aims of the Charter of the United Nations. Why do the decisions of the Security Council in their

overwhelming majority remain mere certificates that attest to violations? Why are international law and international agreements not implemented? Why do strategies and programmes aimed at creating better conditions for people who are suffering remain wishful thinking? When will we finally really take our destiny into our own hands, fully assuming our responsibilities towards our peoples and towards humankind as a whole?

As a leader of a small country that has suffered for more than 44 years from blatant violations of international law, let me repeat the well-known causes that explain those unacceptable and disappointing results, registered at both the regional and global levels. I will dare to mention sad realities candidly and honestly, in the hope that States and international organizations reconsider or make adjustments to their policies and actions with a view to upholding real hope for a better future.

In that effort and struggle we must ensure the cooperation of all, but more so of the States and the peoples who are the victims, those suffering from problems such as the primacy of a State's expansionist interests over the territorial integrity, peace and prosperity of other countries and peoples; investing in and promoting military industries and infrastructure by fomenting conflict for financial gain; standing by passively in the face of such violations of international law as the annexation of territories that fuels separatism and civil wars, so as not to poison relations and common interests among friendly countries; and some States' financing and promotion of terrorism in order to impose religious fundamentalism.

While more than 20 million people in north-eastern Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen and Somalia face famine and are in need of urgent assistance, and while more than 820 million people, including 155 million children, suffer from chronic malnutrition, there are countries in which immense quantities of animal and plant products are destroyed for the sake of narrow and blind economic and commercial considerations. While child mortality and life-threatening diseases persist and the quality of health services is below acceptable levels, we continue to face inflexible policies and practices that emasculate the relevant authorities and prevent them from providing necessary medical care. Instead of tackling the root causes leading to the massive migratory flows of millions of people, we content ourselves with setting up immigration detention centres. While we have adopted the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to address that global challenge, specific interests hinder both the design and the implementation of domestic policies that could deliver on our pledge and commitments.

All of the those factors, in addition to an inability to effectively implement United Nations resolutions, have led to unprecedented crises and resulted in a lack of credibility, trust and even legitimacy in our decision-making, bringing about the forcible displacement of millions of people, hunger and distress that intensify migration flows, create demographic changes and exert huge economic and social pressures on all countries or regions affected, human and drug trafficking, leading to millions of deaths, and the destruction of cultural heritage.

Despite diverging aspirations and conflicting interests, we should rise to meet our shared responsibilities, reverse the policies of political expediency that I have already mentioned, adopt a more proactive, targeted and results-oriented approach and address the root causes that have led to this unprecedented situation. We should intensify our efforts to make sustainable development a reality for all countries and regions in need, once and for all, by establishing the political and socioeconomic conditions necessary for stability, economic growth and institution-building. At the same time, we should also work to confront the threats posed by ongoing conflicts efficiently, in order to achieve lasting and viable political solutions that promote regional peace, security and predictability and spare future generations from the plague of asymmetrical threats.

Collective leadership, together with the primacy of multilateralism, is the only way to effectively eliminate threats to peace and security. We therefore need to strengthen our support and commitment to the United Nations and safeguard the effective implementation of its decisions and actions, based on justice and international law, which constitute the core and essence of the Organization.

In that context, we firmly support the ambitious vision of Secretary-General António Guterres for reforming the Organization in a manner that corresponds to the needs of its Member States and meets the expectations of our peoples. With regard to reforming the development pillar, we reiterate our full commitment to strengthening the capacity of the United Nations so that it can become more effective

and transparent in its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which represents an integral part of our efforts to help all people to live in dignity. In parallel, we must take further action to address States' vulnerability to climate change, particularly small island States, just as we need to put more emphasis on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and accelerate efforts to that end.

Bearing in mind the ongoing unstable situations and conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Nigeria, Myanmar, Afghanistan, the Sahel, the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, of course, the still unresolved problem of the forcible division of my country, reforming the peace and security pillar is particularly important. We fully concur with the notion of the primacy of diplomacy in peacemaking and conflict resolution and the supportive yet catalytic role of peacekeeping operations. However, we must admit that the former is in jeopardy without the latter, and that in the absence of a negotiating process, the need for peacekeeping becomes much greater and, in many cases, indispensable. The situation in my country is a meaningful example of that. Accordingly, while we remain deeply committed to adopting the necessary reforms related to this pillar, we strongly believe that each peacekeeping operation should be evaluated on its own merits, based on actual needs and threats on the ground. The risks involved are far too grave to allow for any experimentation in that regard.

Notwithstanding Cyprus's membership in the European Union (EU), it is located at the epicentre of an area of extreme volatility and instability. Our quest is based on our vision and ambition of becoming a beacon of stability, predictability and synergy for the purposes of promoting shared prosperity and stability for all. To that end, and as a unanimously accepted honest broker with no hidden agenda, we have reinforced our historically close ties with the countries in our immediate neighbourhood, and, together with Greece, we have established trilateral partnerships with several of our neighbours, including Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. Those trilateral mechanisms constitute a fitting example of what can be achieved when countries with shared concerns and common interests join forces rather than isolating themselves. In short, they are a practical expression of effective multilateralism, fully in line with this year's theme of shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. Accordingly, I want to emphasize the partnerships are neither exclusionary nor directed against any third country. On the contrary, they institutionalize cooperation and dialogue in our region, particularly in areas in which there are comparative advantages, such as energy. In that regard, we warmly welcome the expansion of those trilateral formats to include additional partners in other specific fields for mutually beneficial collaboration.

When talking about the importance of achieving peace and stability in our immediate neighbourhood and the means by which that can be accomplished, I feel obliged to stress the significance and consequent multiple benefits that would result from a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem. First and foremost, a viable and lasting settlement would be in the best interests of the people of Cyprus, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, as it would fulfil their aspiration to live in a normal and prosperous European country, fully independent and free from any foreign dependency. At the same time, I remain convinced that resolving the Cyprus problem will undoubtedly have a very important collateral influence on achieving and maintaining a much-needed environment of stability and peace in the region. Last but not least, a resolution of this international problem, which has been on the agenda of the United Nations for decades, will offer a beacon of hope and demonstrate that even the most intractable problems can be solved peacefully through the Organization. Unfortunately, as the peace process has remained at an impasse since the conference on Cyprus in July 2017, I am deeply concerned about the time that has elapsed and its consequences.

To state it clearly, only a viable and functional solution to the Cyprus problem, in line with the principles of our EU membership and the best practices of the democratic countries of the United Nations, can establish the conditions for achieving lasting peace, enabling my country to fully hit its stride and all Cypriots to live in a state of normalcy and work together for their prosperity and security. As I have said previously, I remain strongly and truly committed to achieving a solution on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the European Union acquis, and continuing the negotiations on the six-point framework that the Secretary-General has set as the basis for the way forward. The Secretary-General's framework and good-offices mission constitute the only path to a solution.

We expect that Turkey, which has a key role to play in efforts to reach a settlement, will rise to the occasion, demonstrate the political will necessary for reaching a settlement and concretely contribute to regional stability. For our part, I want to repeat once again that we are determined to rise to the challenge of our historic responsibility and do our utmost to provide a peaceful future for all Cypriots and the region as a whole.

In a fragmented and multipolar world, we have more than ever a moral, ethical and political duty to promote the essence of human civilization, unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and establish conditions that can bring prosperity and welfare to all. That perfectly matches the theme of this year's session, and I hope that by next year we will be in a position to be proud of ourselves because we have taken significant steps towards fulfilling that vision.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ivanov (*spoke in Macedonian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): This year we celebrate the centenary of the end of the First World War. The League of Nations was supposed to safeguard peace, but it failed. The United Nations rose from the ashes of the Second World War to address a world that had been destroyed by fascism, Nazism, racism and colonialism. By adopting the Charter of the United Nations, a brave generation of leaders gave hope to the unprivileged, the oppressed and the denied that they would be able to exercise their right to self-determination.

Seventy years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represented another glimmer of hope for humankind, and thanks to the work of the United Nations and its numerous programmes, that hope became realistic. Through peacekeeping missions, arms control, non-proliferation treaties and the fight against terrorism and international organized crime, we built a safer world. The Sustainable Development Goals have helped us to focus our energy on reducing poverty, eradicating illness, enabling access to education, clean water and sanitation and creating opportunities for young people. With the Paris Agreement on Climate Change we are fighting climate change and trying to build communities and nations that are resilient where threats of disaster are concerned. As a result, millions of people today are living better lives than they did a decade ago. All of those achievements would be unimaginable had we not united our efforts through the United Nations.

As President of the Republic of Macedonia, I can rightly say that the Macedonian people participated in the creation of the post-Second World War order. We were on the right side of history, because, even back in 1941, we had started to fight the evils of fascism and Nazism. The Macedonian State participated in the creation of the United Nations. In 1945, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was one of the founders of the Organization. As a constitutive Republic with a right to self-determination and secession, Macedonia was therefore a de facto founder of the United Nations. As a State within the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, we participated in the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international pacts on civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights that guarantee human dignity, the right to self-determination as well as the right of States to sovereign equality. On 8 September 1991, exercising our sovereign right to self-determination and secession, we peacefully left the collapsing Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and proclaimed an independent and sovereign Republic of Macedonia.

In all of that, a great injustice has been done, and this is what it is all about. To date, we have not been allowed to fully enjoy the privileges of membership in the Organization or of the documents in whose creation we once participated. We have been denied the

sovereign right to call ourselves by our name, as if a mere administrative region in Greece of the same name could have greater rights in international relations than a sovereign State such as the Republic of Macedonia.

Twenty-five years ago, on 8 April 1993, the Republic of Macedonia became a State Member of the United Nations. And yet in this community of equals before the law, the Republic of Macedonia was admitted as less equal, with a derogated legal status and a violated right to self-determination. Today, 25 years later, the talks within the United Nations on this matter may end with the adoption of the so-called Prespa final agreement, which, according to some, should put an end to the name dispute with Greece and open the way to membership for the Republic of Macedonia in the European Union (EU) and NATO. The settlement begins with a grand preamble that would make even the authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights envious. Ironically, the Prespa agreement violates the same universal principles and standards that it refers to in its preamble, including the right to human dignity.

With regard to the rights that have been violated, I want to draw the General Assembly's attention to one, the right to self-determination. Its meaning is that only a nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, and that no one has the right to forcibly interfere in the life of the nation, destroy its schools and other institutions, violate its traditions and customs, repress its language or curtail its rights. The right to self-determination means that a nation may organize its life in the way it wishes, specifically on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to complete secession. Nations are sovereign and all nations have equal rights.

The right to self-determination is what empowers a people to choose their own name and the name of the State that they create. The right to choose a name is an inalienable part of the right to self-determination. Only by respecting the right to self-determination can the United Nations be relevant for all people. As a people, we have borne the name "Macedonians" for centuries and, as a State for 74 years, before the United Nations even existed. Our attachment to that name was confirmed 27 years ago, when we exercised our right to self-determination and proclaimed an independent and sovereign Republic of Macedonia.

Still, through the Prespa agreement, Greece is imposing a new name on us and is asking for an erga omnes implementation for both international and domestic use. It assumes that we will change our Constitution, meaning that Greece would become an ultimate authority whose approval is required for other States' constitutional amendments. Through this settlement Greece would be permitted to permanently monitor not only what we call ourselves but also how all States Members of the United Nations address us. It would be authorized to rename our institutions, censor the content of our children's schoolbooks and prevent citizens from expressing their Macedonian identity, including by regulating what we call our Macedonian language. A very important part of our way of life would therefore depend on Greek will. That would represent censorship of the world and require the Macedonian people to censor themselves. It does violence to our collective historical memory.

There are hundreds of thousands of pages of documents and testimonies in the United Nations archives detailing what the Greek State used to do to Macedonians in Greece. Now, through the Prespa agreement, the Greek State is trying to do the exact same things to Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia. Its aim is to limit the use of the name "Macedonians" to the smallest possible space, that is, the space between our ears, while requiring us to keep our mouths shut. It is a flagrant violation of the right to self-determination.

The Prespa agreement is the bitter fruit of a tree that was poisoned long ago. It is a reflection of a hurtful compromise flowing from the 1995 Interim Accord. At a time when we were internationally isolated, the Interim Accord, achieved under the auspices of the United Nations, was supposed to guarantee that Greece would not block our integration into international organizations. However, it was seriously flawed. No one can transfer more rights to another than they actually possess. And yet under article 5 of the 1995 Interim Accord and the United Nations-led process, Greece was allowed to negotiate with the Republic of Macedonia on its name, in a violation of the right to self-determination.

The Interim Accord itself was not created out of thin air, as it originated in Security Council resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993). Although the Security Council noted that the Republic of Macedonia fulfilled the criteria for United Nations membership set out in Article 4 of the Charter, it nevertheless concluded that there was a dispute over the name of the State, making the Republic of Macedonia's membership subject to the condition of accepting the provisional name of "the

former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and imposing the obligation to discuss the naming issue. That formulation is nothing but a euphemism for violating the right to self-determination, which is how we arrived at the root of the problem.

The right to self-determination was violated when the Republic of Macedonia was admitted to the United Nations. The Interim Accord and the Prespa agreement were adopted to justify that violation. The Assembly should know that the text of the so-called Prespa agreement was prepared without my knowledge or consent as President of the Republic of Macedonia. Moreover, the agreement violates a clause in our domestic law that is of fundamental importance. In other words, the knot that began to form with resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993) and the Interim Accord has now, with the Prespa agreement, taken the shape of a hangman's noose. The Republic of Macedonia is now being asked to commit legal and historical suicide so that the legal abolition of the Macedonian people can then be interpreted as the country's own wilful decision. What does that say about global leadership and shared responsibility in the context of the United Nations?

Greece insists on an erga omnes implementation of the imposed name, which also makes the violation of the right to self-determination erga omnes. However, the International Court of Justice stated in its judgment in *East Timor (Portugal v. Australia)* of 30 June 1995 that the right to self-determination does indeed have an erga omnes effect. However, that very important decision was overlooked in the preparation of the Interim Accord three months later.

It has been said that the Macedonian case is unique in the United Nations. However, the United Nations archives contain an almost identical case in which a Member State argues for denying an applicant country's right to membership because of its name. I say "almost identical" because the United Nations ignored the Member State's request to block the other country's entry. And all of that happened after the precedent we set. I ask the Assembly why the United Nations is unable to do the same in the case of the Republic of Macedonia. Are all States not equally sovereign? Is the United Nations more relevant for some peoples and less relevant for others?

We are once again seeing an unprincipled Athens victorious over a peace-loving Melos, showing that the stronger do what they can and the weaker do what they must. The Prespa agreement puts us in a situation of fait accompli, in which we are told that we are smaller and weaker and must therefore accept the ultimatum of Athens. Instead of being rewarded for our peace-loving nature, we have been punished for it. It seems to have been forgotten that the United Nations was created by visionaries who wanted an order in which even the smallest and weakest of peoples would be protected, because respecting the rights of small peoples and States is a barometer of the observance of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Aristotle claimed that whoever is not part of the polis is either a beast or a god. What the individual used to be to the ancient cities is, in a way, what the State is to the international community today. Greece is acting as if it is not bound by the rules of the international order. With such an attitude, I wonder in which category Aristotle would classify the cradle of democracy in 2018. If the United Nations is incapable of giving force to a just law, then it only legitimizes improper force. An international order cannot be preserved by violating international law.

For a long time, we were persuaded that there was no other way. But through its fruit we recognized the tree. Through the Prespa agreement we have seen that we were misled into searching for a solution that would mean eroding the right to self-determination. How should we undo this complicated knot, this noose around our neck? The unravelling should begin where everything else began, with the violation of the right to self-determination.

The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties states very clearly that every agreement contrary to jus cogens standard is null and void. According to Article 1, paragraph 2, and Article 55 of the United Nations Charter, one of the rights that falls under the jus cogens standard is the right to self-determination. Article 5 of the 1995 Interim Accord specifies negotiations on the right to self-determination, which makes it contrary to the jus cogens standard, which means that the entire 1995 Interim Accord is null and void, as is the Prespa agreement that flows from it.

Mr. Tiare (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

No one has the right to call into question the decision of a people to choose their names or the name of the country they create, which is a decision derived from the right to self-determination, which has been

established as an absolute right of all peoples. Only the right to self-determination, and not its violation, can have an erga omnes effect.

As I am speaking in this Hall, in my country, the Republic of Macedonia, my fellow citizens are counting down the last hours to the holding of a referendum on the Prespa agreement, on which they have been asked to express themselves. In the past few weeks, many high-profile foreign representatives have visited the Republic of Macedonia. I know that many of them sincerely wish to help the Republic of Macedonia become part of the European Union and NATO, and I thank them for their good intentions from the bottom of my heart. However, I am afraid that they too have been misled. Their message is that if the referendum fails and the Prespa agreement is not accepted, we cannot hope for membership in NATO or the European Union. I say to them that if they take away our hope, what will we be left with? They must help us by unblocking the way for the Republic of Macedonia to accede to EU and NATO membership without violating the right to self-determination in the process.

Many of those representatives have been trying to persuade Macedonian citizens to accept the Greek proposal. I would like to ask them if they would accept a derogation of the right to self-determination of their own peoples and countries. Would they accept interference in their internal affairs, or any other breach of their sovereignty and political independence? Why then are we being asked to accept something that no one else in the world would? They must stop trying to persuade us to eat this poisoned fruit. It is high time for the poisoned tree to be uprooted and its fruit discarded.

In the last few hours before the silence of the referendum, I therefore want to convey a message to my fellow citizens in the Republic of Macedonia. Voting on a referendum is their right, and it is not an obligation. In accordance with article 7, item 3 of our referendum law, no one shall be held responsible for voting or not voting in a referendum. Every citizen has the right to decide how to act with regard to the referendum, whether by going out and voting or staying at home and boycotting.

Just as the referendum on 8 September 1991 led to sovereignty and independence, the referendum on 30 September may lead to a state of subordination to another country and dependence on it,. If the referendum succeeds, then in accordance with the law not only will the country's existing name be changed, a new, semi-sovereign country will be created, with a new name and a new internal and international legal identity. We will be a State only in name and not in substance, because others will have succeeded in regulating our way of life.

However, if the referendum fails, a new possibility arises for discussing and exploring new options for resolving the issue, in accordance with international law and with respect for our fundamental right to self-determination. There will be an opportunity to renew the national consensus that we achieved at the beginning of our independence. It does not take courage to capitulate. It takes courage to persist in the realization of a country's right to self-determination and to preserving its sovereignty and independence. It takes courage to tell the truth.

This 30 September will be decisive for our future. And at the same time, for centuries, 30 September has traditionally been the day when we celebrate the faith, hope and love that arise from wisdom. I ask citizens not to lose faith in themselves, because the future of the Republic of Macedonia depends on them. They must not lose their hope and patriotic love for the Republic of Macedonia, because only as a sovereign and independent country can it be a guardian of their freedom and human dignity. As a citizen, I have made my decision. On 30 September, I will not go out to vote. I believe that my fellow citizens will make a wise decision.

I also want to address the representatives of States Members of the United Nations. This irrational dispute has had detrimental consequences for the Republic of Macedonia and its citizens. Thanks to Greek blockades, we have been denied our right to prosperity. Unfortunately, all of that has had an impact on the sustainability of a multi-ethnic, multireligious and multilingual Macedonian society, a society that has actively contributed to peace, stability and security in the region and in Europe for the past 27 years.

The position of the authorities in Athens is contrary not only to international law and the decisions of Macedonian citizens, but also to the will of the almost 140 Member States of the United Nations that have recognized the Republic of Macedonia's fundamental right to self-determination of and to use its constitutional name. As President of the Republic of Macedonia, I urge all States that have already recognized the Republic of Macedonia and established

diplomatic relations under its constitutional name not to change their decision. They must demonstrate their sovereignty by remaining faithful to the principled decisions they have made, without any kind of pressure. They must help us by being the guardians of our right to self-determination, thereby safeguarding their own right to self-determination.

Modern history has shown that the Balkans is a birthplace of precedents. If we are subject to damaging precedents that limit our sovereignty and political independence, it is only a matter of time before such precedents are applied in other States. What does that say about the relevance of the United Nations for all people, about leadership and shared responsibility?

I have always advocated and actively contributed to the building of a true and lasting partnership between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece, as well as friendship and trust between the Macedonian and Greek societies. However, if the only way to accommodate the irrational demands of the Greek side is through measures imposed on the Macedonian side, what we get are relations without trust. The agreement does not bring Macedonians and Greeks together but rather sets them apart.

The Greek and Macedonian societies should learn how to live together despite their deep differences. To reach a real, sustainable and lasting agreement, we need dialogue rather than monologue, arguments rather than ideas imposed by force and mutual respect rather than denial. Only by supporting that just approach will the United Nations be relevant in our case and demonstrate leadership and shared responsibility. The United Nations can be relevant only if it respects its own principles.

It is possible that even as I speak statements are being written condemning my speech. Most often the first reaction to truth is hatred. Truth uncovers lies, unfulfilled promises and guilty consciences. And there are a lot of guilty consciences involved in the case of Macedonia. However, truth also liberates and enables us to accept guilt, to correct mistakes and heal the wounds from the violation of our fundamental right to self-determination and human dignity. The simple truth is that we are Macedonians and our country is the Republic of Macedonia. By respecting this simple truth of our identity, members of this organ respect our human dignity, which is enshrined in the foundations of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea's independence, on 12 October, I would like to extend a greeting of peace and freedom to all the nations of the world as an expression of the gratitude of the people of Equatorial Guinea for the most resounding success of the United Nations since its creation in 1945, the liberation of all colonized peoples. Indeed, the well-being of humankind, a fundamental objective of the United Nations, could not be achieved if the freedom and dignity of peoples and nations were constrained by the subjugation of some peoples by others through the colonial system. For that reason, my delegation would like to to once again raise its voice in this global setting to call for the end of strongholds of colonialism, wherever they may be and whatever form they take.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea wholeheartedly congratulates Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, as a reflection of both the gender equality the Organization seeks to uphold and the political pragmatism of her country, the Republic of Ecuador, in its scrupulous respect for the purposes and principles of the United

Nations. We believe that under her leadership the United Nations will achieve the successes it desires.

We also congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, the outgoing President, on his indisputable successes and outstanding work in leading the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. By the same token, the work of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, deserves our praise for the dynamism with which he has been leading all the bodies of the United Nations with a view to making them less bureaucratic and bringing their efforts closer to Member States.

The topics selected for discussion during this session represent the greatest concerns of the international community. Economically speaking, despite the numerous resolutions and recommendations adopted by the United Nations for promoting nations' sustainable growth and economic development, an insurmountable gap between developed and developing countries continues making it more difficult to maintain peace and stability in poor countries. That compels us to set aside our ambitions and pride and support the achievement of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 with all the means available to us.

A supposedly globalized world in which imbalance, marginalization and instability reign would be difficult on every front, political, economic, social and moral. In that regard, the current problems of mass and uncontrolled immigration of populations from South to North, the internal instabilities of developing countries and rebel and terrorist movements throughout the world are clear reactions to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment suffered by developing countries as a result of behaviour that shows injustice and a lack of solidarity. We cannot guarantee international peace and security while those pockets of violence remain, jeopardizing the lives of populations.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, will always support and give priority to preventive diplomacy to avoid conflicts and foster dialogue, agreements, negotiation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Above all, we ask for scrupulous observance of the principles of international law, particularly with regard to respect for the independence and sovereignty of each State, non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, every country's right to use its own natural resources and the promotion of fair and equitable cooperation with reciprocal benefits among States.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea also praises and commends the peace processes undertaken — through dialogue, compromise and tolerance among the parties — between the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and Somalia, and between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America with respect to the Korean peninsula. Equatorial Guinea calls for similar resolutions of other conflicts in the world, such as those in Djibouti, Somalia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria, Yemen, the Middle East, Libya, South Sudan, Central Africa, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Guinea-Bissau.

For Equatorial Guinea, coercive decisions such as Security Council sanctions have never resolved any conflict in the history of the United Nations. Neither have armed interventions resolved substantive issues. On the contrary, they are opposed to the principles of State independence and sovereignty that endow States with responsibilities. We therefore insist on the value of negotiation as a political and moral tool that is capable of satisfying the parties to a conflict. Contrary to their claims, obligatory condemnations trigger defensive behaviour from the State in question, whether out of pride or in self-defence. Worst of all, such decisions usually result in depriving the affected peoples of their most fundamental rights.

As a matter of international justice, Equatorial Guinea believes in the need to reform the Security Council to make it more democratic, representative and capable of guaranteeing the interests that shape the current global framework. The Council's structure, adopted in 1945, is obsolete, since our world is no longer governed by the political criteria of the time. In that regard, the African continent is the future of humankind today and should not remain marginalized from major decisions that may affect the whole world. The Security Council, which is partly to blame for Africa's marginalization, must also feel responsible for the recent conflicts in the Sahel region and the ongoing unbridled immigration from Africa to Europe.

With regard to my country's domestic development, despite the significant oil crisis affecting Equatorial Guinea, socioeconomic development is evolving positively, thanks to the prevailing peace. We can therefore expect to see the country recover

economically relatively soon. And our transition programme towards a multiparty system, initiated in 1992, has been characterized by an inclusive democratic openness and permanent dialogue open to all. In its first year we recognized 14 political parties, a number that has now risen to 18 in a country with fewer than 1.5 million inhabitants.

Over that period we have held six rounds of inclusive dialogue with opposition political parties, which has resulted not only in the recognition of new political parties, but has also produced reform of the Constitution and of other laws regulating public freedoms. As a result, Heads of State are now limited to two successive terms, whereas before they could hold office indefinitely. Several control bodies for managing public affairs have also been created.

The socioeconomic development plan adopted following our second national economic conference, in 2000, envisaged economic recovery by 2020. Its most significant results have been the construction of basic economic infrastructure such as roads, ports, airports, environmental sanitation facilities, modern hospitals, vocational and university training centres, drinking water systems, telecommunications and power infrastructure and, more recently, the transformation of densely populated rural hubs throughout the country into small modern cities.

Human capacity-building has achieved such levels that citizens are able to responsibly manage national development, which has created an atmosphere of trust between national political forces and the people, who feel empowered to realize their own objectives. In its the effects of the economic crisis, the Government is planning a third phase of the national economic conference with a view to purposefully spearheading the socioeconomic development plan initially set for 2020. We call for the cooperation of friendly countries and for multilateral assistance to support the Government's efforts, which are currently geared to the diversification of production sources, industrialization and the development of the national economy's production sector, as well as capitalizing on existing infrastructure.

The United Nations should serve as a forum for cooperative exchanges that promote the development of humankind as well as a forum for dialogue.

Finally, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea believes that the United Nations is the highest body of multilateral diplomacy within which, if we all adhere equally to the general principles of international law, we can not only guarantee world peace and stability but also build more developed societies that guarantee the rights of all the peoples of the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Moïse (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly. Her unanimously recognized qualities and talent will certainly guarantee the success of the work of the Assembly at its seventy-third session. I would also like to welcome the presence of the Secretary-General and to acknowledge his courageous efforts to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations system, as part of the collective search for, in the words of Pope Francis, the "common good of humanity".

Over the years, the General Assembly has been confronted with two underlying questions related to the main topics on its agenda. How can we optimize our mechanisms for maintaining international peace and security? And how can we translate the need for international solidarity into a much more effective system of cooperation, capable of promoting sustainable development and eradicating poverty in the world?

The United Nations has rightly shed light on the close links between the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development, peace and security. Similarly, the fight against poverty is inextricably linked to the promotion of human rights. Extreme poverty is a denial of human dignity and must therefore be at the heart of United Nations efforts allowing hundreds of millions of men and women to cherish the hope of one day seeing its eradication.

Intensifying the fight against global warming, which is one of the most serious threats to humankind, must also be one of the international community's urgent priorities. The 2016 Paris Agreement on Climate Change was a milestone in this regard. Every effort should also be made to ensure that international obligations and the commitments that arise from them are respected. We are well aware that climate-change adaptation and mitigation regimes and precautionary measures to alleviate damage are extremely costly. One component of any sustainable development strategy, the mitigation of natural hazards, is essential as an investment today in anticipation of events that may occur tomorrow. However, to date, the funding is clearly inadequate to a response that matches the scope of the challenges before us.

Mobilizing new resources for climate change is a top priority. We should point out that the world's most vulnerable countries, especially small island States, and above all those in the Caribbean, including the Republic of Haiti, emit few greenhouse gases, and yet suffer most of the damage caused by increasingly frequent and violent hurricanes. The promises made at last year's One Planet Summit in Paris to enable those countries to adapt their environments and mitigate the ravaging effects of climate change must be kept.

I would like to shed some light on the situation in Haiti one year after the closure of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which was succeeded by the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti. Since assuming the presidency of the Republic of Haiti, I have worked tirelessly to consolidate the rule of law, deepen democratic gains and promote human rights, as I am firmly convinced of the absolute necessity of modernizing our economic, social and political structures in order to enable my country to emerge from the trap of underdevelopment. I have spared no effort to ensure that institutions are stable and create a safe and stable environment that is conducive to investment and restarting growth. In the face of ever scarcer resources and the strong pressure of the population's needs, the Caravan of Change is, in this respect, an innovative strategy that aims to put all the State's resources at the service of the Haitian people.

The social, political and economic modernization processes undertaken by the Government have achieved numerous tangible results over the past 18 months. In this regard, I need only refer to the Secretary-General's latest report on Haiti (S/2018/795), which highlights the important progress made in terms of political and institutional stability, the protection of human rights, strengthening the judicial system and improving the security environment. However, despite these advances, we must recognize that our sluggish economic growth continues to weigh heavily on the national strategy for development and sustaining peace.

The fact is that we are facing interrelated and wide-ranging challenges that are compounded by population pressure, major urbanization, environmental degradation and extreme vulnerability to natural disasters. The 2010 earthquake, the Assembly will recall, caused damage equal to 120 per cent of our gross domestic product (GDP). On top of that, the damage from Hurricane Matthew was equivalent to 32 per cent of GDP. This structural and environmental vulnerability is not without consequences.

In July, following the enforcement of a law on a fuel price adjustment backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), we experienced an unfortunate and painful popular uprising in response to the requirements of the IMF-backed staff-monitored programme. Haiti, which does not produce oil, is therefore dealing with the difficult requirement of having to continue financing Government fuel subsidies.

The violent expression of discontent from some parts of the population cannot be underestimated. It acutely highlighted the key issue of the risks associated with extreme socioeconomic insecurity and a lack of economic prospects, as well as the fragility of the gains we have made so far. However real and indisputable those hard-fought gains may be, they may be jeopardized without adequate long-term support.

One of the lessons that we have learned from the crisis is that while structural reforms are essential, they are lengthy processes that cannot be accomplished in a short time or subjected to the often overly rigid conditions that are imposed by technical and financial partners without taking into account the socioeconomic

realities of each country. While I do not wish to assign blame, I should note that the recent uprising was in large part the result of an overly narrow vision of development aid that does not always allow our international partners to recognize the need for a less fragmented and rigid, more integrated and more coherent approach to interrelated development and security issues that is much more in line with the five principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action.

In other words, the success of the strategy for sustaining peace and the gains made, which is vitally important to us, depends largely on our ability to obtain the additional resources that will enable us to overcome our structural handicaps, including boosting public investment in critical infrastructure and overcoming obstacles to growth that keep nearly three quarters of the population below the poverty line.

I would like to reiterate here, before the Assembly, the solemn commitment I have made to the Haitian people and the international community to spare no effort in resolutely guiding the country on a path to a sustainable development that is based on the rule of law, political stability, the tireless, relentless and persistent struggle against corruption in all its forms, the modernization of institutions, socioeconomic progress and the consolidation of democratic gains and achievements in the field of human rights, which, I am convinced, are irreversible.

The newly formed Government of National Unity has embarked on that task with a renewed plan of action and a number of priority objectives and benchmarks. They include immediately improving the living conditions of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable segments of the population through innovative programmes; improving the business climate; reviving public and private investment for growth and the creation of jobs, in order to foster the expansion of the middle class and significantly reduce social inequality and exclusion in all its forms; pursuing further reforms aimed at consolidating the rule of law, strengthening the justice system and the national police force, alongside the ongoing remobilization of the Haitian armed forces; fighting corruption in all its forms and manifestations; holding legislative elections in October 2019, as planned; and intensifying measures to strengthen the promotion and defence of human rights.

At this crossroads, I urge our partners in the international community to continue to offer the Haitian people active solidarity, within the framework of a renewed, coherent and substantial assistance programme, which will be aligned with national priorities and implemented in close collaboration with national institutions and the private business sector, and thereby better adapted to the realities on the ground. This paradigm shift will significantly strengthen national efforts and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals that we have set for ourselves as a first step and to eradicating poverty by 2030.

We cannot repeat it often enough — peace, development and security go hand in hand . They must be adequately supported by appropriate long-term investment. In particular, they require an allocation of resources better adapted to the real needs of recipient countries, taking into account their structural vulnerabilities. This resource allocation must be more flexible and less subject to conditions that could ultimately undermine the very viability of reforms and key development goals, including long-term stability. Access to good electrical, digital, school, health, environmental, hydraulic and road infrastructure is a prerequisite for any country that aims to achieve sustainable development. The Republic of Haiti received nearly $11 billion in donations and loans between 2006 and 2016, and yet some of that infrastructure is still not in place.

How can we talk about sustainable development when there is no drinking water in families' taps? How can we speak of sustainable development when there is no water for the irrigation of agricultural land? How can we speak of sustainable development when there are no good roads linking cities and villages? How can we speak of sustainable development when there is no electrical or digital infrastructure? How can we speak of sustainable development when there is no adequate school or sanitary infrastructure? It is those questions that we ask ourselves, the answers to which we are tirelessly striving to find for the Haitian people.

In order to build a suitable electrical and digital transmission and distribution network over Haiti's 27,750 square kilometres, we need approximately $400 million. The Republic of Haiti has nearly 1 million hectares of agricultural land, half of which can be easily irrigated. Unfortunately, only 5 per cent of that land is irrigated, meaning that we need $675 million to

make an additional 450,000 hectares viable. We need only 220 million cubic metres of water each year to make household tap water available across Haiti. Yet 40 billion cubic metres of surface water are dumped into the sea every year. Approximately $300 million would enable us to treat the 220 million cubic metres needed to serve all of Haiti's communes.

We need to produce 50 million fruit and forest tree seedlings each year to be able to reforest the country. The construction of 14 germplasm and plant propagation centres, which would be able to produce 63 million seedlings a year, costs approximately $35 million. With regard to education, we need 15,000 classrooms to enable the 500,000 children who are not yet in school to have access to a good basic education. We need approximately $450 million to build those classrooms. Moreover, we need 122 health-care centres to fill the deficit across communes, which will cost $20 million. I also take this opportunity to challenge the international community on the obligation to mobilize resources to eliminate cholera, which was introduced by MINUSTAH in Haiti, and to compensate the victims. In addition, in order to connect and renovate the 146 communes of Haiti and improve certain sections of roads, we need $800 million. From this rostrum, I would like to say to our technical and financial partners that together we must muster the courage to rethink development aid for Haiti and other countries in similar situations, using the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action as our guides.

With the Republic of Haiti's meagre financial resources, we have begun to rebuild the country. Today more than ever, we need that synergy to build the future of our country. We must work together, while scrupulously respecting Haiti's priorities. The fight against corruption that began on 7 February 2017 cannot remain wishful thinking. It is a battle that will allow us to bequeath to future generations a better country in which life is worth living.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Sebastián Piñera Echenique, President of the Republic of Chile

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chile.

Mr. Sebastián Piñera Echenique, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sebastián Piñera Echenique, President of the Republic of Chile, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Piñera Echenique (*spoke in Spanish*): Twenty years ago, in this very Hall, Kofi Annan set out the three great challenges facing the international community at the time: first, the challenge of security and the need to replace the post-Cold War world order with a new one, governed by peace and freedom; secondly, the challenge of development and the need to ensure that globalization benefited all peoples and countries, leaving no one behind; thirdly, the challenge of human rights and the rule of law, and the need to protect the dignity of all without distinction as to race, colour, gender, language or any other discriminatory factor (see A/53/PV.7).

Twenty years have now gone by, and the challenges bequeathed to us by Kofi Annan — security, development and human rights — remain just as important and are still key challenges to our world order. These challenges, of course, come under new guises and take on various forms. We are no longer divided by the mistrust, fear and prejudice that were the legacy of the walls and iron curtains that emerged in the wake of the Second World War. The truth is that many factors unite us in terms of human dignity and freedoms, and we are connected by a knowledge- and information-based society that has enabled those who embrace it to reap the benefits but is indifferent and cruel to those who turn their back to it. We are living at a time of vast global transformation, which means the emergence of tremendous new opportunities as well as major new dangers.

Some believed that the end of the Cold War also meant the end of history, and that we had at last found our way and were approaching an era of peace, freedom and prosperity, based on democracy and the social

market economy. However, history will never meet its end as long as there are still free men and women who think for themselves. Accordingly, a new world order has emerged that has given rise to new divisions and tensions in many parts of the world. States are no longer the only main players in international relations.

In the area of security, we have not yet been able to overcome serious threats to international peace and security such as terrorism, drug trafficking, armed conflict, organized crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and illicit trafficking in weapons and persons. Furthermore, as never before, today we are compelled to face one of the biggest challenges resulting from these threats to international peace and security — large-scale migration around the world, which is a significant challenge for the entire international community. We are aware of its causes — terrorism, war, ethnic and religious conflict, hunger and totalitarian regimes, all of which have recently caused the largest displacement of people in the history of humankind. The figures are stark and speak for themselves. There are currently 260 million people who have had to leave their countries of origin. Every year more than 1.3 million people abandon their countries for the reasons I have mentioned.

In the light of that situation, Chile's commitment is categorical and clear. We are designing a safe, orderly and regular migration policy, in line with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which raise the need to establish migration policies that guarantee safe, orderly and regular migration. We want to receive and welcome all who enter Chile seeking new and better lives, who do so with the intention of obeying our laws, committing to the development of our country and to integrating into our society. With equal strength and conviction, however, we want to keep order in our country and bar those who enter illegally, break our laws, come to commit crimes or have committed serious crimes in their countries of origin. By doing so we can prevent and impede the entry of drug traffickers and people involved in organized crime, because all Presidents and Heads of State and Government are responsible for their citizens' safety, which is of course a key concern for any Government.

Our migration policy seeks to strike a balance between the State's sovereign right to regulate the manner in which migrants enter and remain in our country, on the one hand, and its duty to respect and guarantee the fundamental rights and duties of migrants, on the other, by putting a stop to irregular immigration, punishing criminal acts and welcoming those who come to integrate legally into our societies in accordance with the law.

The second great challenge is development. Six months ago, when I embarked on my second term as President of Chile, I pledged to undertake a great mission — transforming Chile into a developed country without poverty and with greater equality of opportunity and solidarity by the end of the next decade. Genuine development is much more than economic growth. We are therefore talking about comprehensive development that encompasses all aspects of our lives, an inclusive development that reaches all families, individuals and regions, and a sustainable development that protects and is in aligned with nature and the environment. That is the genuine development that all peoples and countries need and that we almost all ratified through our previous commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and now through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which we are committed under the auspices of the United Nations.

For that reason, the importance of defending and strengthening multilateralism and free trade, to which many have alluded this week, is now severely under threats from such things as trade and tariff wars, the consequences of which we felt as long ago as the Great Depression of the previous century. The economic dimension is, of course, very important. More than ever, we need to promote and bolster an international system that is predictable and based on clear and agreed standards, fosters free trade and enables mechanisms for settling disputes peacefully rather than through conflict, confrontation or tariff wars.

However, we must also think about creating a culture and an international community that are built on the principles and values of freedom, human dignity, full respect for human rights, gender equality and the fight against climate change and other new emerging threats, such as those related to cyberspace.

Such comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable development compels us to implement robust measures aimed at ensuring full equality in terms of rights, dignity and opportunities for both women and men, as well as a culture of zero tolerance for violence or discrimination against women. Our true development

can be measured by the way in which we treat our societies' most vulnerable members, such as children, women, elderly people, those suffering from disease and the poorest. In many of those areas, many of our countries still have a long way to go.

Today our planet faces major threats and challenges, such as a deteriorating environment, global warming, growing desertification, the destruction of the ozone layer, the depletion of natural resources, the loss of biodiversity, as well as air, water and soil pollution and deforestation, to name just a few.

Some time ago, major and well-regarded magazines published photographs of the Earth with the caption "Save planet Earth". But that should not be our greatest concern. Planet Earth has existed for more than 4 billion years and has survived all kinds of catastrophes — flooding, glaciation, warming and earthquakes. What is actually at risk is the survival of the human race on planet Earth. During its long history, 99 out of every 100 species that have ever existed have now disappeared. Naturally, we do not want to add human beings to that sad list of extinct species.

We know that the environment is changing and that global warming is occurring faster than our efforts to understand, halt and stop it. The alarm bells continue to sound and our citizens continue to march, and we cannot claim to be ignorant about it. We have a duty to respond immediately to nature's desperate cries for protection, so that in turn it can protect us. There is no time to lose and no reason to procrastinate about this, because time is no longer our ally. It is our enemy. Our generation's response to this great challenge will undoubtedly be judged by our children, grandchildren and other generations to come. The threat of climate change and the way we address it will define this and future centuries and requires a vast multilateral effort. We are aware that we are dealing with a truly serious, urgent and growing threat that we can no longer ignore, delay or downplay.

No nation is immune to that threat, but Chile is especially vulnerable. My country is a veritable observatory and natural laboratory, as it contains very diverse land, maritime, coastal and glacial ecosystems, among many others, as well as unique island ecosystems that are home to more than 30,000 species of plants, animals, fungi and bacteria. In addition, Chile is geographically unique because of its natural barriers, the Andes range to the east, the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Atacama desert to the north and the Antarctic to the south, which means that we are home to species found nowhere else in the world. For example, almost 90 per cent of fish species — the highest percentage in the world — on Robinson Crusoe Island in the Juan Fernández archipelago are endemic; in other words, they are unique to that environment.

However, that virtue is also our Achilles heel. Chile, as a natural observatory, is greatly exposed to the risks and threats of climate change and global warming. In fact, seven of the nine major vulnerability factors listed in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change apply to Chile — low-lying coastal areas, arid and semi-arid areas, large forested areas, areas prone to natural disasters, areas prone to drought and desertification, urban areas with atmospheric pollution problems, and mountainous ecosystems.

That compels us to seek urgent and effective solutions in order to adapt to and address the threat of global warming. As President of Chile, I am especially committed to sustainable development, in other words, environmentally friendly development that respects nature. A threat that was once remote is now upon us, and we are currently witnessing the lethal impact of those changes and their possible future impact on present and future generations. There is no time to lose. We must take the bull by the horns and do whatever is necessary to change the course of history.

What has Chile done in that regard? First, we are committed to creating protected areas that preserve crucial biodiversity. Chile has been a regional and world leader in creating protected areas since the beginning of the last century, starting with the Malleco National Reserve. Today, there are 180 marine and land-protected areas in Chile covering more than 120 million hectares.

We are also firmly committed to conserving our oceans, their biodiversity and the sustainable use of their resources. We have already protected more than 13 per cent of our exclusive economic zone, which stretches along Chile's approximately 4,200 kilometres of coastline. And we are on our way to achieving 40 per cent protection, with the largest marine protected area in Latin America, one of the largest in the world, on wondrous Easter Island, or Rapa Nui.

In addition, the energy path that we are following towards a cleaner, safer, more cost-effective and more diversified energy matrix that strongly promotes decarbonization has enabled us to make significant

headway in developing clean, renewable energy, particularly volcanic energy — Chile has 25 per cent of the world's active volcanoes — as well as wind and solar energy, since Chile is home to a desert with the highest solar radiation levels in the world. We are also making great advances in removing fossil fuels from our transport system and moving towards electromobility, with a more definitive solution that is more compatible with those objectives.

Moreover, we are addressing the threat to our planet posed by plastic. We understand how important it is for all Governments to act in time to prevent 12 billion tons — a figure we have almost reached — of plastic waste from ending up in natural environments, meaning that there would be more plastic bags than fish in our oceans. I am very happy that the first piece of legislation to be adopted during my current term in office has banned the use of plastic bags in Chilean shops. Chile is the first country in Latin America to restrict the free distribution of any kind of single-use plastic bag. The fact is that one plastic bag takes seconds to produce and is used, on average, for 15 minutes on the journey back from the supermarket, but then takes 400 years to biodegrade, which means that for a few minutes of use, nature and humankind must suffer the harmful effects of one plastic bag for more than 400 years.

Once and for all, we must address many of those problems with a new attitude and abandon the idea that the goals of economic growth and the protection of the environment are incompatible. The fact is that if growth is unsustainable, it will simply cease to exist. We must also abandon our throwaway culture and return to embracing one of recycling.

Pollution has struck very dramatically and close to home in my country, Chile. Over the past few weeks, the two communes of Puchuncaví and Quintero, which have long been overpolluted, experienced serious episodes of environmental pollution, affecting the health of many citizens. In view of the seriousness of the situation, I immediately visited the areas concerned to meet with the authorities and the communities and to see and experience, with my own eyes and senses, the dramatic effects of that environmental disaster. During my visit, I made a promise to Chilean citizens to rewrite the future for those two communities and many others. To that end, we are implementing a plan to resolve the emergency situation and protect our citizens' health. We are also developing a long-term solution to enable us to better protect the quality and health of our water, air and soil through ongoing monitoring with the highest available technological standards and the implementation of extraordinary emission standards for polluting companies, as well as a comprehensive pollution plan that will enable us to permanently resolve such situations and achieve a definitive solution, putting an end to the so-called sacrificial zones in our country.

We know that nature is not a gift inherited from our parents, and that we therefore cannot use it as we like. Rather, it is a loan from our children, grandchildren and future generations. We must nurture it and return it to them in better condition. That challenge must involve all stakeholders in society. Channelling collective and multisectoral efforts requires the commitment of us all. That is the aim of the framework law on climate change that we are implementing in Chile and that by 2030 will enable us to reduce our greenhouse-gas emissions by 30 per cent compared to the base year.

To do it, we must incorporate the climate-change perspective into all public policy and private-sector commitments. We are doing just that by incorporating environmental and climate-change policies into our national investment system and our evaluation systems for public expenditure and environmental impact. In addition, we are including those concerns and commitments in both bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which unites 11 countries on both shores of the vast Pacific Ocean, as well as in the ways in which we are addressing the process of adding new members to the Pacific Alliance.

Without doubt, those developments have reduced our carbon emissions and will continue to significantly reduce them while strengthening our economy. The challenge is extremely demanding and requires great determination and ambition. In that regard, we have two important allies, the first of which is technology. Today, the scientific imagination and innovation and the scientific and technological advances that have emerged from the freedom and creativity of free men and women have equipped us with new tools to combat this relatively new and serious threat..We must therefore continue to boost and foster our technology and scientific entrepreneurs so that they will join this fight and not repeat the errors of the past. In recent days we learned of an initiative that can clean the rubbish and plastic out of our oceans more efficiently. In our efforts

to fulfil our commitments, those are the technologies that we are using in my country.

Moreover, we have a multilateral system that enables us to act in a coordinated manner. That is precisely the point of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, we are aware that bureaucracy often slows down United Nations efforts. We must therefore improve coordination and be able to generate more delivery and accountability, while also focusing more on the results and less on the process. As a great United States President once remarked, our generation is in a unique twofold situation. We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and also the last generation that can do something about it.

I shall now turn to human rights — the third challenge raised by the late Kofi Annan 20 years ago in this Hall — and the challenge of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Five years ago, from this very rostrum (see A/68/PV.5), I was able to share the lessons and teachings of Chileans 40 years after the collapse of democracy in our country, and after its subsequent recovery. The lessons we have learned have specific relevance.

The first and most important lesson is that there are always moral and legal norms that should be respected by everyone: combatants and non-combatants, civilians and soldiers, leaders and subordinates, with the result that atrocity crimes such as torture, crimes against humanity, terrorism, political assassination and forced disappearances can never be justified in any context, time, place or circumstance. Freedom, democracy, peace and civic friendship are much more fragile than we tend to think, which means that we must never take them for granted. They must always be valued, taught, fostered and protected, because they are like air. When we have it, we take it for granted, but when we do not, it is often too late to get it back.

In Chile we are now a few days away from marking 30 years since the referendum of 5 October 1988 that paved the way for us to regain our freedom and democracy. I would like to take this opportunity to recall the two major transitions that our generation has had to face in Chile. The first of them enabled us to regain our freedom and democracy, which we achieved in an intelligent and exemplary manner. Normally such transitions take place amid political crisis, economic chaos and social violence, none of which happened in our country. We were able to restore our freedom and democracy in an admirable manner.

However, that transition is now history. The new transition, our transition, that is currently under way and depends on us consists in transforming Chile, once the poorest of Spain's Latin American colonies, into a developed country, without poverty and with greater social justice and equal opportunities, in which we can all develop our talents and life plans and live fuller and happier lives, by the end of the next decade. We must complete that transition with the same unity, generosity and intelligence with which we carried out the transition that allowed us to regain our democracy.

On human rights, I want to clearly and strongly state today that human rights, freedom and democracy know no borders. I would therefore like to bring to the General Assembly the voice of the Venezuelan people, which President Maduro's regime has silenced. Venezuela is a sister nation that for many long decades was a democracy that brought great progress and well-being to its people, generously opening its borders to many Latin Americans so that they could find shelter, work and opportunity there that were not available in their own countries.

Unfortunately, today Venezuela is governed by a regime that respects none of its principles, neither freedom nor democracy nor human rights. It is a society that is being torn apart by a moral, political, social and humanitarian crisis — a moral crisis, because the basic values of human rights are not respected; a political crisis, because there is no democracy, rule of law, separation of powers or freedom of expression, and there are hundreds of political prisoners; and an economic crisis, because Venezuela, once the richest country in Latin America, now has less than half the production capacity it had in its heyday.

Indeed, Venezuela is undergoing a tragedy. Its inhabitants are fleeing from a dismal and perilous existence. Many, too many, are literally losing their lives for lack of food and medicine. President Maduro, while denying the situation, is not letting in the humanitarian aid that many countries are willing to deliver. In recent years, more than 2 million Venezuelans have had to leave their country as a result of the crisis I have just outlined. I ask myself how a President can be so ambitious and callous that he is willing to cause his own people such pain and suffering in order to prevail and cling to power.

However, Venezuela is not the only country in that situation. The same is happening in countries such as Nicaragua, in which more than 400 people have already died as a result of the violence fostered by the State and President Ortega's Government. In fact, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which has reported assassinations, extrajudicial executions, ill-treatment, torture and arbitrary detentions in that country, was expelled from Nicaragua a month ago. There are also similar occurrences in Cuba, where for more than 60 years there has been no freedom, democracy or basic respect for human rights, as evidenced by its arbitrary detentions and, as in Venezuela and Nicaragua, its censorship of freedom of expression, which is guaranteed under article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Chile does not recognize the legitimacy of the recent presidential elections in Venezuela, because they did not fulfil the basic requirements necessary for free, democratic and transparent elections, in accordance with international standards. We will therefore not recognize the legitimacy of the new Government that emerged from the election. Chile will continue to do all it can, in accordance with international law, to help the Venezuelan people to regain their freedom, democracy and human rights and emerge from the sad and tragic disaster affecting the country.

For that to happen, we need the support of the multilateral system, in particular the United Nations. We believe that the Organization, through the Security Council, should address the democratic and humanitarian crises affecting those countries. As I have said before, in modern times, freedom, democracy and respect for human rights do not and should not recognize borders. Chile will therefore use all the mechanisms available under international law and work with all its strength and commitment to restore freedom, democracy and human rights in those countries.

I would like to end my statement with a reflection on the current state of the United Nations and the reforms and updates that many countries think the United Nations now urgently requires. The United Nations, which has contributed to the maintenance of international peace and security on countless occasions as the cornerstone of multilateralism, today has highly restricted and limited powers. We have lost the ability to prevent crises and to strengthen the institutions of Member States with the aim of generating a true culture of democratic resilience that is capable of surviving breakdowns, like those suffered in some countries in our region. We therefore believe that the time has come for the United Nations to modernize, as has been suggested by many Member States on various occasions, in order to be able to act more quickly and effectively in the face of the challenges of the modern age.

The structure of the United Nations, and especially its Security Council, is a legacy of the victors in the Second World War, which ended more than 70 years ago, and it does not meet the needs and challenges of current times. In fact, we all know that some permanent members of the Security Council exercise or threaten to use their right to veto for reasons that are based more on their own interests or those of their allies than on their duty to preserve peace and security in every corner of our planet.

That behaviour has reduced and continues to reduce the effectiveness of a fundamental organ of the United Nations that not only holds enormous power but also has a tremendous responsibility, that of preserving peace and security on our planet. In addition, the current composition of the Security Council does not reflect today's world and does not adequately represent entire continents, such as Africa or Latin America, or countries such as Germany, India and Japan.

I would therefore like to conclude by emphasizing that it is not only development that should be sustainable, but also peace. It is precisely at times like these that the values we share as an international community should guide and illuminate our actions and the path ahead. People must not be united by free trade alone. What should guide us is the maintenance of peace and security and respect for the basic values that led to the formation of the Organization, and it is therefore those same values that must illuminate and guide the path to its future.

Only by strongly and coherently reviving those values will the United Nations be able to fulfil its responsibilities and rise to the challenges of the new world we live in. Together with the formidable threats that we are confronted with, such as terrorism, global warming and mass migration, we also have magnificent opportunities that are generated by the freedom, imagination and unlimited creativity of the free men and women of this world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the

President of the Republic of Chile for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sebastián Piñera Echenique, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bio: It is a distinct honour for me to address the General Assembly for the very first time as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Sierra Leone, I would like to express our heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of the Republic of Ghana and to the United Nations family on the passing of Kofi Atta Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations. He served humankind and the world with distinction, and in our country's hour of need he helped to steer it out of a deep abyss of seemingly intractable war. May he rest in perfect peace. He always showed us what was possible and the best in humankind.

Our commitment to building a peaceful and more secure world, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as our commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the ongoing reform processes of the United Nations, perfectly resonates with the theme for this session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". The work of the United Nations should continue to be guided by the values on which it was founded, including the promotion of peace, security, human rights, the equality of all nations, social progress and better living standards.

In April Sierra Leoneans registered their commitment to democratic governance with yet another peaceful transfer of power from a political incumbent to the opposition. We acknowledge with humility the many messages of commendation from various parts of the world for our conduct of peaceful and credible presidential, parliamentary and local council elections, which led to my election as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

On behalf of the people of Sierra Leone, let me say that we sincerely appreciate the international community's invaluable contributions to facilitating and monitoring our electoral process. We acknowledge the role played by the United Nations and our development partners in supporting the successful conduct of the elections. We are a successful model of a stable democracy, one that has evolved and matured over 20 years from the chaos and lawlessness of civil conflict.

However, stable democracies must also be sustainable. Sierra Leoneans voted for a change of Government and for a new direction and the right direction. My Government is ready to maximize our country's potential for development, because we believe that development sustains emerging, successful and stable democracies like ours. The international community has invested hugely in facilitating and stabilizing Sierra Leone's democracy, and it must continue to play its role in sustaining Sierra Leone's democracy, in collaboration with the Government and the people of Sierra Leone.

In addition to our firm commitment to good governance and the prudent and accountable management of our nation's resources, we are ready to foster a congenial environment that is conducive to credible gross domestic product growth. We call on our bilateral partners to help us deliver on our people's expectations through the provision of development funds and technical assistance and the cultivation of valuable trade links. We cordially invite all credible investors to an open and congenial investment environment, in which all their investments are guaranteed and protected by our relevant laws. We have worked assiduously to remove barriers to investment, and I ask all such investors to help us sustain our democracy.

The Assembly made a historic pledge during the 2005 World Summit to strengthen the United Nations

with a view to enhancing its authority and effectiveness, as well as its capacity to address effectively, and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter, the full range of the challenges of our time. A number of gains have been made, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council and the adoption of resolutions on the responsibility to protect. Those are laudable gains, but the need for reform is also urgent and imperative. We should now endeavour to demonstrate the political will to redress specifically the historical injustice done to the African continent.

The present geopolitical realities compel us to work to comprehensively reform the Security Council in order to ensure equitable representation in every organ of the United Nations. Africa is the only continent without representation in the permanent category of the Security Council, and is also underrepresented in the non-permanent category. Africa's demand for two permanent seats with all the rights and prerogatives of current members, including the right of veto, and for two additional non-permanent seats, is a matter of common justice and the right to have an equal say in decision-making on issues that affect the African region. It is time that we addressed without further delay the long-standing injustice and imbalance that is being perpetuated in the present configuration of the Security Council.

Africa is committed to the ongoing reforms that will make the United Nations fit for purpose in the twenty-first century. As the Coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government on the reform of the United Nations, we reiterate our concern about this body's continued inaction on adopting measures that will enable Africa to take its rightful place in the Council. Unless and until we are able to contend with the reform of the Security Council, the most critical question of the day, the Organization will remain seemingly constituted on undemocratic and discriminatory principles.

I want to emphasize the urgent importance of comprehensive reform of the Security Council by pointing out that 1.2 billion of the world's 7.5 billion people are African. Those 1.2 billion continue to contribute their fair share to maintaining world peace and security. About 70 per cent of the decisions taken in the Security Council ultimately affect those 1.2 billion Africans. Those 1.2 billion people, who are affected by more than 70 per cent of United Nations resolutions, are therefore asking why they should be excluded from the Security Council, where they simply want their voices to be fully represented.

My Government's blueprint document for moving our country forward, entitled "The New Direction", focuses on taking Sierra Leone beyond the phase of peacebuilding and consolidation to firmly establishing a stable, peaceful, open and pluralistic democracy that is a responsible and committed member of the international community of nations. At the domestic level, my Government has established priority areas, including job creation, access to quality education, youth empowerment, the empowerment of women and the disabled, combating graft and corruption and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency, ensuring effective and efficient public-service delivery and strengthening civic responsibility and national cohesion.

Guided by both our specific situation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our Government's initiative and policy actions involve strengthening our democratic institutions, opening up democratic spaces, promoting democratic dialogue and creating a more just and equal society. We see those as precursors to the sustainable growth of our economy and our development as a nation.

Among other things, my Government's economic and development policies, as I stated earlier, create a congenial environment for credible private-sector investment and entrepreneurship. We are eager to work with and listen to the private sector. Our policies are enabling, and our investment framework is attractive. We can ensure the full legal protection of all investments, and we can ensure predictable and profitable revenue streams and returns on investments.

Sierra Leone is starting to adopt renewable energy. We now need public and private investment for commercial and industrial uses, such as powering hotels, agriculture and small-scale manufacturing. My country is endowed with sufficient renewable energy resources in solar irradiation, coastal and offshore wind and mini-hydro and bioenergy. My Government's target of 60 per cent renewable energy capacity by 2030 is practicable, especially in terms of generating growth in rural areas.

Sierra Leone, like most developing countries, has been on the expensive and dirty liquid-fuel treadmill since its independence. My Government is seeking

international technical assistance and capacity-building for migrating a percentage of the country's power generation away from heavy liquid fuel to natural gas that is trucked to site. In that regard, my Government is seeking collaboration with local companies and engineering companies from around the world.

We believe that investment in renewable energy sources and liquefied natural gas will help us to meet SDG 7 by modernizing our energy-generation systems, which will have a multiplier effect by helping our country to meet the SDGs for poverty alleviation through job creation and increased investments in health, water delivery and cities. We are determined to make Sierra Leone the renewable energy hub of the Economic Community of West African States region. Our vision is positive for our world's climate, for foreign and local investors and development and for our country.

My Government has a bold vision for science, technology and innovation. In that regard, I have established the first directorate of science, technology and innovation. We have set an ambitious and achievable target for 2025 of developing solid information and communication technologies infrastructure that will support graft-free governance and the delivery of effective, reliable, responsive and transparent services, ranging from banking and business to education, agricultural extension, revenue collection, health-care delivery, access to justice, governance, tourism, trade and the rule of law.

We have undertaken extensive reforms, in line with the SDG 16+ Forum, to create a peaceful, just and inclusive Sierra Leone with resilient institutions. We are engaged in judiciary and criminal justice reform and, in collaboration with civil-society and partner organizations, we continue to build on gains in the delivery of justice that take into account disparities in access to justice.

We have launched a focused and sustained campaign against graft, waste and the misuse of public funds. Our revenue authority has streamlined revenue collection and reduced tax evasion and theft. We have launched a free quality education programme that provides access to basic and secondary education for girls and boys of school age.

We are building, retooling and opening up our governance, health-care, financial and other institutions so as to empower our women and young people, the aged and our elderly and disabled compatriots. We are also reviewing discriminatory laws and practices, and will engage communities in order to change traditional structures that have excluded such persons. In particular, our young people, like their counterparts all over the world, are energized and eager to make Sierra Leone a better place. Our development policies and priorities harness their vibrancy and direct it towards targeted education and skills training, entrepreneurship and strong civic participation.

We are working on a comprehensive biometric identification system, so that all citizens can fully participate in the economic and civic life of our nation. In particular, we acknowledge the support of the United Nations Development Programme, Kiva and the United Nations Capital Development Fund in strengthening our national digital identification system. With their assistance we are modernizing our credit reference bureau, which will radically transform our financial inclusion landscape and the ease of doing business in our country.

We are fully committed to promoting a free press, rescinding adversarial public-order laws and protecting and promoting the right of citizens to know and access information. We have instituted a national civic-education commission to further ensure the unrestricted participation of every Sierra Leonean in our stable democracy. For all of those efforts, we need a constructive yet intensive and sustained engagement with our bilateral partners and partner institutions.

My Government is committed to increasing equitable access to quality health care for Sierra Leoneans. We call on our bilateral partner organizations and private investors to help us invest in and develop our critical institutional, technical and human-resource capacity, as well as the infrastructure needed to ensure the delivery of quality health care for Sierra Leoneans.

We recall with great appreciation the magnanimity of the world as we dealt with recent deadly epidemics such as the Ebola virus disease, and the sustained interventions of our partners in helping us to battle tropical diseases, including malaria, cholera and typhoid. We need more help in all those areas and in expanding and maintaining all immunization levels at 100 per cent. My Government has increased health-care investment, but that will not be enough. We call on the international community to enhance our institutional and technical capacity for preventive health care and for

managing public health and environmental sanitation issues, including waste management and storm-drain water management in urban areas.

Sierra Leone welcomes the renewed commitment of the United Nations to conflict prevention, as embodied in its Charter. The world needs a stronger United Nations more than ever before, as well as consistent and effective multilateralism that collectively evaluates and cooperatively resolves humankind's common challenges, from trade to climate change and from world security to our common humanity and our collective social and economic well-being. Our foreign policy should be driven by the golden rules of impartiality and cooperation. That is the only way that humankind can respond effectively, without hesitation, to the global challenges that we all face today.

We acknowledge the continued relevance of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which constitute the global framework for preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We welcome the Secretary-General's reform agenda on sustaining peace, including the efforts to reform peacekeeping, which is one of the most effective tools available to the United Nations for peace and security.

My Government will bolster Sierra Leone's participation in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security, as a troop- and police-contributing country, and in supporting United Nations peacekeeping operations, especially with the deployment of formed units or contingents of both military and police. Sierra Leone stands ready to continue contributing to world peace and security.

With a strong belief in a shared vision and a common destiny, Sierra Leone stands with the world in meeting global challenges. Sierra Leoneans also look to the world for the help it can offer in helping to consolidate Sierra Leone as an economically developed, open, inclusive and pluralistic democracy. As we often say, we are a country with a faith that wisdom inspires and one with a zeal that never tires. We are optimistic, because our country stands ready, on the threshold of a new direction.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the State of Palestine.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Abbas (*spoke in Arabic*): Jerusalem is not for sale and the rights of the Palestinian people are not for bargaining. Peace be upon the General Assembly. We will keep our faith in peace, we will maintain peace, and we will achieve our independent State with peace, because God is with us, our cause is just, our people have sacrificed a great deal and Assembly members are supporters of peace. God Almighty is against those who are unjust. Allah will suffice me, and He is the best guardian.

During last year's general debate, I came before the Assembly (see A/72/PV.8) appealing for freedom, independence and justice for my oppressed people, who have been suffering under the yoke of Israeli occupation for 51 years. I return to the Assembly today, as that colonial occupation continues to suffocate us, undermining our unwavering efforts to build the institutions of our cherished State, which the General Assembly recognized in the year 2011.

This year the Palestinian National Council, which is the Parliament of Palestine, convened and renewed the legitimacy of our national institutions through the election of a new leadership for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The Parliament took important decisions that

committed me to reconsidering the political, economic and security agreements that have been reached with the Israeli Government, and to reviewing the future of the Palestinian National Authority, which has, unfortunately, been rendered powerless. In addition, the Parliament asked me to suspend the Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel until Israel in turn recognizes the State of Palestine based on the 4 June 1967 borders. Moreover, it requested that I approach international courts, including the International Criminal Court, to have them investigate the Israeli Government's breaches of the treaties it has signed, and investigate the aggressions of the Israeli army and the terrorist practices of settlers against our people, our land and our holy sites. The Assembly will note that every single day, Israeli settlers, and even the Israeli army, desecrate our holy sites, in particular the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Last July, Israel adopted a racist law that crossed every red line. It is called the Jewish nation-State law. It denies the connection of the Palestinian people to their historic homeland and dismisses their right to self-determination, their history and the United Nations resolutions relevant to the Palestinian question. It also denies the agreements concluded with Israel, which will inevitably lead to the creation of a single racist, apartheid State, thereby nullifying the possibility of a two-State solution. Israel practices racism but has now crowned its practice with that new law.

Mr. Bessho (Japan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The new law also discriminates against Arab citizens of Israel, granting the right to self-determination in the State of Israel exclusively to Jews and thereby legalizing discrimination against the Arab citizens, who make up 20 per cent of the population of Israel. In addition, the law discriminates against other non-Jews who have immigrated into Israel, stripping them of their citizenship rights. At least 5 per cent of Israel's current population are non-Jews, mostly Christian and Muslim immigrants, many of whom emigrated from the former Soviet Union. Those people have also been stripped of their rights to citizenship.

The new law constitutes a gross political and legal violation, as well as a real threat that reminds us of the apartheid State that existed in South Africa. We therefore strongly reject and condemn it. We further call on the international community and the Assembly to take action to reject and condemn it as a racist and illegal law that is null and void, as the United Nations did when it condemned the former apartheid State of South Africa in several resolutions, bearing in mind that thousands of Jews and Israeli citizens have also rejected the new law and demonstrated against it. Fifty-six of the Knesset's 120 members have rejected it, because they deem it a law of racial discrimination. I therefore call on the United Nations to follow in the footsteps of those Israeli citizens who have rejected it.

That racist law talks about the so-called land of Israel. Could Assembly members ask the Israeli Government what exactly the land of Israel is? What are the borders of the State of Israel? I challenge anyone to give me an answer and bring me a map that shows Israel's borders. That racist law constitutes another stigma for the State of Israel and for anyone who keeps silent about it, as well as about other Israeli laws that legitimize piracy, the confiscation of land and the seizure of the funds of the Palestinian people.

We have always engaged positively with the various initiatives of the international community that seek to achieve peace between us and the Israelis, including the Arab Peace Initiative, which was recognized by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003).

We have also been dealing with the Administration of President Trump from the beginning of his tenure in the same positive spirit, and we welcomed his promise to launch a peace initiative. I have met with him on numerous occasions. While we eagerly awaited his peace initiative, we were shocked by the decisions and actions he took that completely contradict the role and commitment of his Administration to the peace process. In November 2017, his Administration made a decision to close the PLO office in Washington, D.C. He then announced his recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved his country's Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He even boasts that he has taken the issues of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and security off the negotiating table.

All such decisions threaten the Palestinian national cause and constitute a violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The United States Administration went even further in its aggression by cutting assistance to the Palestinian National Authority, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and Palestinian hospitals in occupied East

Jerusalem. Then they talk about humanitarian aid, and even that they have already stopped.

With all of those decisions, the Administration has reneged on previous United States commitments and undermined the possibility of a two-State solution, while revealing the falsity of its claims of concern about the humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people. It is very ironic that the United States Administration still talks about what it calls the "deal of the century". What is there left for the Administration to offer the Palestinian people? Humanitarian solutions alone? If it has removed Jerusalem, refugees, security and other issues from the negotiation table, what is left for a political solution in the Middle East?

The United States Congress continues to insist on viewing the PLO as a terrorist organization, although it is recognized as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by the overwhelming majority of countries of the world, including Israel. However, the United States Congress continues to claim that the PLO is a terrorist organization, even though it is recognized by Israel, while the State of Palestine is cooperating with a majority of countries of the world, including the United States, to combat terrorism. Why is there then such animosity towards the Palestinian people, who are suffering under the yoke of an occupation that is supported by the United States?

We would like to tell that Administration that our position is firm and clear for all to see. We challenge them to find a single mistake that we have made during our long journey. However, the United States Congress says that the PLO is a terrorist organization. Why? I do not know. The Congress has decided and we must listen.

For years, we have affirmed to the United States Administration our willingness to establish a Palestinian-American committee to examine the political and legal status of the PLO, as a means of demonstrating to the Administration that the PLO is committed to achieving peace and combating terrorism, as well as showing that the decision of the Congress regarding the PLO is arbitrary, unlawful and unjustified, while the Congress deliberately ignores the official agreement between the PLO and the United States Administration on combating terrorism, an agreement that we have also concluded with 83 other countries. We have protocols with 83 countries under the heading of combating terrorism, including the United States. However, the United States Congress calls us terrorists.

Despite all of that, I renew from this rostrum my call to President Trump to rescind his decisions and decrees regarding Jerusalem, refugees and settlements, which contravene international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, as well as the understandings that we have reached aimed at salvaging the peace process and achieving security and stability for future generations. Incidentally, here is an example of those understandings. There is a letter signed by the United States Administration and ourselves concerning many issues, but the Administration now ignores all of them.

Consistent with our commitment to peace and a two-State solution, and the negotiations that we never rejected leading to their achievement, I challenge anyone to cite a single instance in which we refused to come to the negotiation table. On the contrary, we have been invited more than once by several countries in this very Hall to sit down with the Israelis and with Mr. Netanyahu. Every single time, I accepted. I challenge anyone to tell me that I ever refused or that he accepted even once. We have never refused those negotiations, because we want to rescue the peace process. I appeared before the Security Council on 20 February of this year (see S/PV.8183) and presented an initiative calling for the convening of an international peace conference based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and internationally endorsed terms of reference. Such a conference should involve broad international participation, including of regional and international stakeholders, led by the permanent members of the Security Council and the Quartet. We will circulate to Members a document laying out the initiative in its entirety and hope that the Assembly will adopt it.

In that regard, I reiterate that we are not at all against negotiations, and we have never once rejected them. We will continue to extend our hand to achieve peace. We believe in peace as the only path to reach our cause, as I said at the beginning of my statement. We do not believe in violence and terrorism. We miss no opportunity to reiterate that fact. What is required of us? Negotiations on the basis of international legitimacy? None of the international legitimacy resolutions since 1947 has been respected up to now, so what solutions are we talking about?

Peace in our region cannot be realized without an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital including all the holy sites. Some people try to outsmart us by asserting that our capital is in Abu Deis and other places surrounding Jerusalem. That is a manipulation of words. No. Our capital is East Jerusalem, not "in East Jerusalem". I would ask others not to try to outsmart us by saying "Abu Deis" or "in East Jerusalem" so that they can pick and choose an area here or there. No, it is East Jerusalem, which has been occupied since 1967, that is our capital.

Peace is not possible otherwise, because there can be no peace in a State of temporary and unknown borders, like the State of Israel with its unknown borders. They invented the idea of a State with temporary borders and said: "We will give you a State but with unknown borders". Subsequently, they said, "Let us talk". No, we unconditionally want a State with very well-defined borders and rights. Only then can we coexist with the Israelis.

There are 138 States in the Assembly that have recognized the State of Palestine, recently joined by Colombia. That makes 139. I therefore call on the countries of the world that have yet to recognize the State of Palestine to make that long-overdue recognition happen. I can no longer see a convincing reason justifying the continued delay in the recognition of the State of Palestine by certain countries. In that regard, I want to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that in 2019 the State of Palestine will chair the Group of 77 and China. Ten minutes ago, I met His Excellency President Al Sisi of Egypt in a conference room, and he announced that we have been freely elected by 134 countries to chair the Group of 77 and China. Nevertheless, there are certain countries that say, "We recognize both countries". If so, why do they not recognize Palestine? That is entirely unacceptable. We tell those countries that if they recognize us, it does not mean that we will not pursue negotiations. On the contrary, that will bolster our international standing, and, together with their support, we will be able to participate in negotiations assisted by their recognition of the State of Palestine. That recognition should not be unilateral in the sense of recognizing one State only, while refusing to recognize the other. They have to recognize both States.

I would like to remind the Assembly once again that Israel has not implemented a single one of the hundreds of General Assembly resolutions on this topic. The General Assembly has adopted 705 resolutions on the problem since 1947. And the Security Council has adopted 86 resolutions since 1948. Not a single resolution has been implemented by Israel. Unfortunately, I have to say frankly that Israel is supported in that by the United States. The General Assembly gave us 139 votes in favour, while 42 States abstained. Only eight countries voted against. For how long will Israel be an outlaw, do whatever it wishes and act as a rebel backed by whomever it wants?

We are resisting the Israeli occupation by legitimate means that have been recognized by the United Nations and include primarily peaceful popular resistance. We will use no other means, only peaceful popular resistance. Is that illegal? By contrast, Israeli settlers are using weapons against the Palestinian people. They destroy cities, towns and villages with their weapons. I am not talking about the army and the police. I am talking about the Israeli settlers. We reject and will continue to reject violence and the use of force. We will reject every type of weapon and will not accept the use of arms anywhere. We call on the world to pursue efforts to achieve disarmament, including of both nuclear and traditional weapons.

We currently face a problem in Khan Al-Ahmar, where Israel is insistent on destroying a village that has been populated by Palestinians for more than 50 years. If Israel destroys that village, it will be destroying the unity of the West Bank, which will consequently be divided into north and south. That is what Israel wants to do. Does the Assembly agree with that? There is also the continued aggression against the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Does the Assembly remember the previous attacks on Al-Aqsa, which were stopped by peaceful popular resistance? We are now being told that the Israeli Supreme Court will approve a decision to divide Al-Aqsa by time and space. We will definitely not accept that, and I am sure that people with courage, dignity and a desire for peace will not accept it either. Israel should bear the brunt. Its senseless thuggery must come to an end. Every day there is a new decision taken as though we do not exist.

A United Nations resolution (resolution ES-10/20) was successfully adopted for our international protection, because every day we are being attacked, and we are not capable of protecting ourselves. That resolution was adopted, but who will implement it? In all honesty, it is not sufficient for the General Assembly to adopt a resolution without implementing

it just like other resolutions. The General Assembly must respect its own resolutions. We applauded that resolution, but it is not being implemented. Please, tell us how we can implement that resolution. That is the Assembly's responsibility.

While we welcome the economic and humanitarian support being provided through legitimate international institutions to our people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, we reject the notion that such support can be considered a substitute for a political settlement. Our cause has many humanitarian aspects, but with a political settlement, that humanitarian aid would not be needed. Do not try to fool us by saying that the Assembly is helping us.

We want the right to the self-determination of our people, no more, no less. Any people, large or small, should enjoy the right to self-determination. There are 13 million Palestinians around the world. Why are we being denied the right to self-determination? It would harm no one. We want to establish an independent State that will live alongside the State of Israel. What is wrong with that? What crime we would be committing?

We are facing another problem. We continue to make genuine and serious efforts to put an end to the current division in our governance and achieve reconciliation despite the many obstacles preventing us from attaining those aims. To this day, we still uphold our responsibilities towards our people in the Gaza Strip.

We express our appreciation to our Arab brethren, particularly our brother Arab Republic of Egypt, for their efforts to end the division, hoping that those efforts will be successful. We entered into an agreement, with Egypt as a sponsor, on 12 October 2017. The agreement is very simple. The Palestinian Government will carry out its responsibilities, both in Gaza and in the West Bank, and then we will establish our State on a basis of unified law, authority, regime and legitimate arms. We reject the notion of militias. However, that agreement has not been accepted by the other party. Perhaps, over the coming days, we will witness a final round of talks before taking the next steps. I would like to sum up by saying the following.

First, the Palestinian population numbers about 13 million human beings, even if not everyone views them as human beings. We are not superfluous people. A population is never superfluous, regardless of its size. Why are we treated as a superfluous people that the world should get rid of? That is totally unacceptable. Yet we are patient and steadfast, and we believe in peace and in peaceful means. We want to be viewed as humans. We are not superfluous.

Secondly, we have entered into agreements with the United States Administration, which has, however, reneged on all those agreements. We are committed to and will abide by our part of the agreements, but if the United States Administration fails to honour them, then we will not abide by them either. So an agreement should be respected by all parties to it. I respect those agreements fully, but if the other side does not respect them, I will not respect them or be committed to them either. The United States wishes to act as a mediator, and yet we see now that the United States cannot single-handedly act as a mediator. We have the Middle East Quartet, which any country can join, whether from Europe, the Americas, Africa or even the Arab region. Any country may join the Quartet to act as a mediator between Palestine and Israel, but the United States cannot act as the sole mediator, because it is too biased towards Israel.

Thirdly, there are also agreements with Israel, such as the Oslo Accords and the Paris Agreement. Those agreements have all been abrogated by Israel, and we call on it to re-engage with them. If it does not, we will certainly not uphold our commitments. We have also concluded an agreement with Hamas, and our brothers in Egypt recognize that we have upheld our side of the agreement. However, Hamas has failed to fulfil its obligations, which is why we will not bear any responsibility from now on for the failure of that agreement, if Hamas insists on rejecting it. I would like to be perfectly clear that we will not bear any responsibility while Hamas continues to refuse to abide by the agreement.

Despite all the injustice we experience from the world, we will never resort to violence or terrorism. We will continue to combat violence and terrorism all over the world. We will never accept aggression against any country, whether that country recognizes us or not and whether it likes us or not.

I would like to make a very important point. The United States Administration stated that the number of Palestinian refugees is only 40,000. How was that number calculated? It need only consult UNRWA to see that the number it has calculated is wrong. It does not want to consult UNRWA; rather, it wants to obliterate

it, so as to end the refugee issue forever. UNRWA was established in 1949 in order to help the Palestinian refugees until their issue is resolved. To this day, that issue has not been resolved. Of 13 million Palestinians, there are still 6 million refugees — not 40,000, as claimed by the United States Administration. That number has been arrived at haphazardly by the Administration, just the way it decided to abolish UNRWA and expected the world to agree with it. No, that will never happen.

Lastly, I call on our people to remain patient and steadfast and to continue to make sacrifices until we achieve independence and self-determination, with the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, not merely "in Jerusalem". Let them not fool us. I pay tribute to our righteous martyrs and our courageous prisoners. Israel considers them criminals. Why? Israel has thousands of people who have attacked all kinds of people and are considered heroes. Why is it that the person who killed Yitzhak Rabin is considered a hero, while our people are criminals?

I send greetings to our heroic martyrs and prisoners. I would like to say to everyone that soon the dawn of freedom and independence will shine and the dark occupation will come to an end, God willing.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the State of Palestine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the President of the European Council.

Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Tusk (European Council): The European Union is fighting intensely to preserve the rules-based international order, which is currently under great strain with regard to trade, security, climate change and human rights. We say that not only as countries that strongly support the United Nations, but as a continent that cares deeply about respect, mutual understanding and solidarity among nations.

As leaders, we must equip the United Nations with the means to successfully fulfil its mandate. More unity and collective actions are needed in the struggle against conflict, poverty and famine, terrorism and the mass displacement of people, as evident in Venezuela, Syria, Myanmar and many other places. To that end, the European Union firmly supports the current effort to reform the United Nations. Those reforms are much needed and overdue. Their urgency is clear, and their implementation is essential.

The European Union is taking on more responsibility for security matters. We have initiated ambitious cooperation among our countries' militaries. We are ready to step up our help to our neighbours through crisis-management missions, capacity-building and peacekeeping in cooperation with others, including NATO, the African Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The European Union also supports the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and expects it to produce more effective and better resourced global security solutions.

Europe has taken action against the increased use of disinformation and outside propaganda to interfere in open and democratic elections. The anonymity of cyberspace is used by external actors to cloak malicious political interference. It is not just a problem for Europe; many others here today have been similarly affected. The United Nations should help expose that phenomenon, attribute responsibility and increase democratic resilience.

One hundred years after the birth of Nelson Mandela, we commemorate his triumph over apartheid in South Africa. I am very pleased that the occasion coincides with deeper ties between the African Union and the European Union. The summit of our two Unions in Abidjan last November was key. Thanks to excellent cooperation between the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations, we have so far helped more than 30,000 people leave Libya through voluntary humanitarian returns. We want to expand the work with our partners in other areas. Education, investment

in development, climate change and free trade will therefore be at the heart of our future relations.

Africa is a continent of great challenges, but also one of equally great opportunities. Instability in Libya has brought the world's attention to the suffering caused by human smugglers and traffickers who take brutal advantage of people and weaken the States in which they operate. The Security Council named some of the worst violators in June. They and those like them should be sanctioned, apprehended and brought to justice. In the meantime, the European Union will work diligently and in good faith with our North African partners on search and rescue efforts in the Mediterranean. Only collective responsibility can offer effective solutions to global problems such as migration and forced displacement. I truly hope that the recent United Nations debates on the future management of migration and refugee protection represent a step in the right direction.

The European Union leads global resettlement efforts, including resettlements from Turkey, which, along with Jordan and Lebanon, is hosting refugees who have been displaced by the fighting in Syria. The Syrian people are suffering as the war continues. The memorandum of understanding on Idlib must be fully implemented in order to help to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe. All parties must respect international humanitarian law, ensure the protection of civilians and allow aid to reach those in need. A meaningful political process under the auspices of the United Nations is especially needed in order to resolve the conflict.

Sustainable development and increasing intercontinental connectivity will bring countries, people and societies closer together. Those priorities will be crucial in our future relations with Africa and also at next month's Asia-Europe Meeting, which I will be hosting in Brussels. They go hand in hand with the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and other international commitments. From floods to fires, the impact of climate change becomes more visible every year, and sadly, we now measure the impact by the loss of human life. Although only slow progress is being made on our main task, which is implementing the Paris Agreement, the European Union remains fully committed to it and has set it as a priority in its relations with our partners.

On the subject of the environment, I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to all leaders to take action in order to protect the waters around the Antarctic. There is still time to save the natural habitat of many endangered species by establishing maritime sanctuaries in the Southern Ocean. Let me say it loud and clear. Those who can imagine our planet without whales, penguins and other species will also have to imagine our planet without humans.

Non-proliferation is another global challenge we face, but there the situation is looking better, thanks to multilateral action on sanctions. A year ago, the situation on the Korean peninsula was critical. Although much depends on the attitude of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we have seen that diplomacy can open the way to more comprehensive solutions. A similar situation exists with Iran with regard to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. While addressing nuclear issues, that deal has also helped to create space for dialogue on other matters of concern, such as Iran's regional behaviour and ballistic-missile programmes. The agreement is good for European, regional and global security. That is why the European Union is committed to maintaining it as long as Iran remains fully committed to it.

I have mentioned the anniversary of Nelson Mandela's 100th birthday. In the next few hours, we will also celebrate the seventy-fifth birthday of another Nobel Peace Prize winner, a great Pole named Lech Wałęsa. Both men are symbols of a beautiful cause — how to win without violence, forgive our oppressors and overcome evil with good in public life. Today, when so many people — including some here in this Hall, and even the most powerful of world leaders — are starting to give up on freedom, solidarity and democracy, let us remember Mandela's and Wałęsa's message. Regardless ofhow difficult their situation was, they never capitulated in their fight.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the European Council for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): "The only route that offers any hope of a better future for all humanity is that of cooperation and partnership" (*A/56/PV.7, p. 2*). Those were words spoken from this rostrum by the late Kofi Annan 17 years ago, at the dawn of the twenty-first century. This year, we commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War. Exacerbated rivalries, economic tensions and vengeful withdrawals led to misunderstanding, frustration and hard facts on the ground. Unilateral actions and failed dialogue led to the irreparable wiping out of sacrificed generations, as half of the twentieth century was crushed by the horror of two world wars and the shame of the Holocaust.

It took the foresight and courage of a generation to provide the outline of an international order based on values and rules. From the ashes of tragedy in the previous century, the birth of the European Union and the United Nations has created hope for a better world. The European Union has enjoyed a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity. Its concrete achievements include a free economy based on fair competition, freedom of movement and the establishment of social and environmental standards.

The European Union is the result of a tireless dialogue that is sometimes complex and often restrictive. That dialogue is based on an ambition that goes far beyond simply adding to national interests. That ambition is the promise of the founding fathers, namely, the freedom and dignity of every citizen, the rule of law and democracy as a bulwark against arbitrariness in governance. Those are the pillars that have laid the foundations for peace and security. The Charter of the United Nations declares the importance of dignity and respect for every human being, regardless of where they come from, the colour of their skin, their origin, philosophical or religious beliefs or sexual orientation. Our universal values are the strongest and most reliable benchmark for addressing each of the challenges that the world faces.

Democracy and the rule of law are always the best guarantees of the realization of fundamental rights and freedoms, because the rule of law is the arbiter that protects the weak from the strong. The rule of law means that we assume the consequences of our actions. The rule of law is the rejection of impunity. The rule of law is also the guarantee that science and knowledge are better shared among us. Putting human beings at the centre and establishing the rule of law as the basis for international order is what should drive the engine of multilateralism.

Multilateralism is not a hollow and meaningless concept. On the contrary, it is a conviction, because dialogue is tireless, including with those with whom we do not easily share the same points of view. That dialogue is key. Multilateralism is cooperation and negotiation; it is the battle of ideas and arguments rather than weapons. Multilateralism is the rejection of violence. It is up to us to be committed to a better, more just, safer and more sustainable world.

Who here believes that bringing together the 193 national sovereignties represented in this Organization with each acting unilaterally could miraculously produce a virtuous and effective response to our common challenges? That is an illusion. It is the same illusion as thinking that the invisible hand of the market can naturally and miraculously lead to progress and shared well-being. Capitalism needs rules, and so does humankind. Of course multilateralism requires patient efforts. Of course there may be failures. However, multilateralism is the only way to eradicate poverty, neutralize terrorists and preserve the natural resources of our planet. My country regrets that international agreements, the result of tough and intense negotiations, can be swiftly and unilaterally jettisoned. In just a few months, the nuclear agreement with Iran, as well as trade agreements and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, have all been cast aside by one of the signatory parties.

Trust and cooperation between sovereign nations implies respect for the promises and commitments that have been made. History has always shown that the law of the survival of the fittest does not protect anyone; quite the opposite. The most lasting solutions are always those that are balanced and widely accepted. As we know, Iran was on the brink of acquiring nuclear weapons and, as we know, the negotiations on the problem were long and difficult in reaching a compromise. It took reciprocal courage to overcome deep mistrust and hostility, and we know that the agreement is not perfect, given that it does not cover Iran's ballistic programme. At the same time, the

inspections conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency confirm that Iran has been fulfilling its commitments. Should the agreement be thrown aside owing to its imperfection? Should we not open a new chapter of multilateral negotiations to complement and improve that agreement?

Unilateral, brutal and unpredictable actions make the world more dangerous. They result in imbalance and frustration and serve as seeds of conflict. On the other hand, we are made stronger by dialogue and negotiation with mutual respect. Dialogue helps us to deal with and resolve our disagreements and offers better results. For 70 years, the United Nations has persistently worked to improve the world, based on a common foundation of fundamental values. It is our duty to identify the challenges, develop strategies and, especially, to act. Our Organization has immeasurable potential, and in that connection I would like to commend the intelligent, energetic and tireless work of Secretary-General António Guterres.

Throughout its history, my country has been committed to working for peace and building consensus. In that strong conviction, Belgium has been elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the next two years. We will live up to the confidence placed in us. We will ensure that we foster dialogue with all actors. We want to promote a respectful and transparent debate so as to inspire a greater spirit of trust among us. We will work for security, prosperity and respect for our planet.

Collective security is the ultimate requirement, and it is just common sense to seek to prevent conflict whenever possible. That is why we support the permanent monitoring of all indicators of violence. We are also in favour of setting up early-warning mechanisms, because serious violations of human rights should never leave us indifferent. The manipulation or rigging of elections, violations of territorial integrity and threats of the use of force are always early-warning signs of future conflict. The search for a peaceful and political solution must always be at the heart of our approach, and peacekeeping operations must always be part of a credible political framework.

Finally, let us be honest with each other. The presence of Blue Helmets on the ground must not become a smokescreen for political resignation, either in conflict zones or at the regional or international level. Every peace mission must be regularly evaluated against the yardstick of its contribution to realizing the political goal in the noble sense of that term. During our time as a member of the Security Council, we would also like to focus on protecting the most vulnerable in armed conflicts. In our view, the protection of civilians, especially children, as well as ensuring dignity and respect for women and the safety of schools, hospitals and humanitarian channels, are the essential priorities. We cannot tolerate the intolerable. Those who flout, often cynically, those fundamental principles of international humanitarian law must be punished. The fight against impunity must also seek to create the conditions for living together in peace after the conflict. Living together in peace and harmony is an existential issue in the Near East and Middle East. The tragedies that we are witnessing in Syria, Libya and Yemen remind us of the long road still to be travelled. We cannot allow regions to become arenas for the cruel and deplorable battles of warring nations, with no regard for the humanitarian tragedies that subsequently ensue.

Twenty-five years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the peace process in the Middle East remains at a standstill. The excitement generated by some developments, which often contradict international law, only creates further obstacles and difficulties and dims hopes for peace. We maintain our support for the two-State solution, with the two States living side-by-side in peace and security, with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

The proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction poses a serious threat to the future of humankind. We will remain fully engaged in non-proliferation efforts.

We want a more prosperous world, with more shared development and the freedom to be entrepreneurial and to innovate, create and trade. The development of science and knowledge and the rejection of obscurantism are always the basis for development and the improvement of living conditions. The digital economy and the artificial-intelligence revolution bring with them fears and uncertainties, but above all they offer new opportunities for a better world, if those advances are designed to serve everyone.

We must also ensure that we, always and everywhere, encourage efforts to promote good governance, transparency and the fight against corruption. For centuries, trade has promoted peace among peoples. Trade develops mutual understanding, respect for cultures and traditions, sharing and the

exchange of experiences. Trade leads to prosperity. Prosperity leads to peace. Freedom of trade must be based on healthy and fair competition and a shared level playing field, with ambitious and reciprocal social and environmental standards. In that respect, the recent trade agreement between the European Union and Canada, concluded despite much resistance, including in my own country, offers such guarantees. I am delighted with the impressive and rapidly achieved results, with jobs and investment at its heart, leading to better social protection and therefore more freedom.

Before 2050, the African continent is expected to have a population of 2.5 billion. One in four human beings will therefore be African. For a long time, my country has been advocating for a new, more global, dynamic and ambitious partnership with the African continent. We know how much potential there is in Africa. Energy, agriculture, infrastructure and digital technology offer areas of opportunity for the future. I want to make a strong appeal here for a sacred Africa-Europe alliance — a strong and sustainable alliance for the development of both continents in the service of our peoples, an alliance for investment, trade and jobs in Africa and Europe.

I say to our African friends that it is up to us, that we should turn the page on the antagonisms of the past. Let us heal ancient wounds. Let us forge a partnership free of nostalgia or guilt. And above all, let us dare to renounce charity, which eases the conscience but also entails a dose of humiliation. Let us draw up a peer-to-peer strategy based on the shared values of the rule of law, democracy and respect for our fellow citizens. In ten years, we can, if we wish, build an unequalled and unprecedented area of prosperity. I advocate a very ambitious free-trade agreement, from continent to continent, a global and reciprocal partnership, a win-win situation for all.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out the path for a better and fairer world, and everything is there — poverty eradication, access to health and education, gender equality and the fight against global warming. The only possible option is the general mobilization and ownership of this joint programme. All of us, at all levels, let us roll up our sleeves, decide and act, because the countdown is on. There is urgency about this, and the results are fundamental.

Climate change is not constrained by borders. Natural resources are limited and the number of people on Earth is constantly increasing. The stubbornness of some in denying the reality of climate change is of the same order as the stubbornness of those who in the past denied that the Earth was round. Prosperity must be sustainable. It can no longer be based on a frenetic and selfish exploitation of our precious natural resources. Oceans, biodiversity, air quality and health are precious assets that must be cherished and respected.

Natural disasters are falling on us one after another and are ever more spectacular, ever more deadly. Just a few weeks ago in India, in Kerala, unprecedented floods forever shattered the fate of 450 people, displacing a million others who had been displaced and are now homeless. The harmful effects of climate change are going to cause or aggravate conflicts. In West Africa, for example, access to water is leading to increasing tensions between herders and farmers, with the risk of escalation on the basis of ethnicity and identity. Faced with that existential challenge for our children, our responsibility is shared. Alone, we can do nothing. Together, we can do anything.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change must be implemented. We must, of course, give up certain habits. We need to change our behaviours. But it will be worth doing, because the future of humankind is at stake here.

Throughout history, human beings have always migrated. Our host country here is a great example. Men and women from elsewhere, seeking to discover a new world, have built a free and prosperous nation. This year, we recorded the highest number of migrations ever. It is not a question of being for or against an unavoidable phenomenon. The issue is about whether we can manage it in an orderly way so as to reduce fears, tensions and conflicts. We must first pull migration out of the claws of smugglers and traffickers in human beings, the abject slavers of modern times. We must also reject the trap of deliberate confusion fomented by populists on all sides, whether from the far left or the far right.

My country intends to continue to fully assume its responsibility to humankind. During the past three years, we have granted international protection to nearly 45,000 people, and that is many more than in the past. I am also in favour of an effective policy of return for those who do not meet the conditions set forth at the international level.

Finally, it needs to be said that the time has come to pursue legal and orderly forms of international mobility, for example, to enable students to get an education and then return home, or for other economic reasons. In December, in Marrakech, my country will sign the global pact on migration, because that document is a step in the right direction. It clarifies the various concepts and could be a lever for the future and for a more organized and controlled management of international mobility. Indeed, we can say that extremists on all sides and human traffickers are in the same boat. The former instrumentalize and fuel the migration issue for electoral and political purposes, the latter for low financial purposes.

In conclusion, peace is our most precious asset. History has always shown that peace requires courage and vigilance at all times, and that no continent or country is immune to the poison of the fear of others, or of hatred or selfishness. We all come from different backgrounds, with our histories, our cultures, our traditions, but also with our emotions, which stem from the roots of our past. The demands of memory must serve our lucidity. The demands of memory must rally our energy so that it can rise to the challenges of this century. Those challenges know no borders. Development, the fight against terrorism, climate change, are all problems that no country, regardless of its economic or political power, will be able to overcome by itself.

Beyond our many differences, we will always share a common feature, our humanity. Every human being, by the simple fact of his or her birth, must be free. That being's dignity must be recognized and respected. It is a pivotal value, and the fundamental condition for making the world progress unflaggingly towards greater hope and optimism. Our method is based on our faith in a committed, creative, invigorating multilateralism. We reject all forms of inertia and resignation, because we believe that the best is within us.

"Law and order rather than violence; tolerance rather than selfishness; knowledge rather than obscurantism; respect for others rather than hatred or fear": that is my country's credo. Belgium is a loyal, solid and reliable partner. We will spare no effort to make the world a safer, more sustainable and, above all, more just place.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for the Economy, Minister for Communications, and Minister for Regional Cooperation of the State of Israel

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for the Economy, Minister for Communications, and Minister for Regional Cooperation of the State of Israel.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for the Economy, Minister for Communications, and Minister for Regional Cooperation of the State of Israel, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for the Economy, Minister for Communications, and Minister for Regional Cooperation of the State of Israel, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Netanyahu (Israel): When I spoke here three years ago (see A/70/PV.22), Israel stood alone among the nations. Of the nearly 200 countries that sit in this Hall, only Israel openly opposed the nuclear deal with Iran. We opposed it because it threatens our future, even our very survival. We opposed it because the deal paved Iran's path to a nuclear arsenal. By lifting the sanctions, it has fuelled Iran's campaign of carnage and conquest throughout the Middle East. We opposed it because the deal was based on a fundamental lie, that Iran is not seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

Israel exposed that lie earlier this year. In February 2018, Israel conducted a daring raid on Iran's secret atomic archive. We obtained more than 100,000 documents and videos that had been stashed in vaults in an innocent-looking building in the heart of Tehran. In May, I presented a short summary of what we obtained to the international media. I provided hard evidence of Iran's plans to build nuclear weapons and its plans to deceive the international community. Israel shared that information and even more damning evidence that we found with members of the five plus one group and with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Months have passed, and the IAEA has still not taken any action. It has not posed a single question to Iran. It has not demanded to inspect a single new site discovered in that secret archive. Given that inaction, I have decided, therefore, to reveal today something else that we have shared with the IAEA and with a few intelligence agencies. What I am about to say has not been shared publicly before. Today I am disclosing for the first time that Iran has another secret facility in Tehran, a secret atomic warehouse for storing massive amounts of equipment and materiel from Iran's secret nuclear-weapon programme.

In May, we exposed the site of Iran's secret atomic archive. It is in the Shorabad district of Tehran. Today I am revealing the site of a second facility, Iran's secret atomic warehouse, which is located in the Torquzabad district of Tehran, just three miles away from the archive. Let me show exactly what the secret atomic warehouse looks like. From this image, it looks just like the atomic archive, another innocent-looking compound. For listeners at home using Google Earth, this no-longer-secret atomic warehouse is on Mehr Alley. The coordinates are on the image. Anyone can try to get there. And for those who try to get there, it is a hundred meters from the Kalishoi, a rug-cleaning operation. By the way, I hear they do a fantastic job of cleaning rugs there. But by now they may be radioactive rags. That is the second secret site.

Now countries with satellite capabilities may notice some increased activity on Mehr Alley in the days and weeks ahead. The people they will see scurrying back and forth are Iranian officials desperately trying to finish the job of cleaning up that site. Since we raided the atomic archive, they have been busy cleaning out the atomic warehouse. Just last month, they removed 15 kilogrammes of radioactive materiel. What did they do with it? They had to get those 15 kilogrammes of radioactive materiel out of the site, so they took it out and spread it around Tehran in an effort to hide the evidence. The residents of Tehran, now endangered, may want to know that they can get a Geiger counter on Amazon for only $29.99. At today's exchange rate, that is just 4 million Iranian rials. But we will get to that later. I will talk about the Iranian economy in a minute.

They took that radioactive material and spread it around Tehran. The Iranian officials cleaning out the site still have a lot of work to do, because they had at least 15 gigantic ship containers full of nuclear-related equipment and materiel stored there. Since each of those containers can hold 20 tons of materiel, the site must have contained as much as 300 tons of nuclear-related equipment and materiel, all in that very place.

We now have to ask ourselves a question. Why did Iran keep a secret atomic archive and a secret atomic warehouse? After all, when South Africa and Libya gave up their nuclear programmes, the first thing they did was to destroy both the archives and the materiel and equipment. The answer to the question is simple. The reason Iran did not destroy its atomic archive and its atomic warehouse is because it has not abandoned its goal to develop nuclear weapons. In fact, it planned to use both of those sites in a few years when the time was right to break out the atom bomb. Delegations may rest assured that that will not happen. It will not happen because what Iran hides Israel will find.

I have a message for the Head of the IAEA, Mr. Yukiya Amano. I believe he is a good man. I believe he wants to do the right thing. I therefore ask him to do the right thing now. The IAEA should inspect that atomic warehouse immediately, before the Iranians finish clearing it out. Do delegations remember the time when we were promised that inspections could take place anytime, anywhere? Well, how about inspections of Mehr Alley right now? And while Mr. Amano is at it, he should inspect the other sites that we told him about. Once and for all, he should tell the world the truth about Iran.

I also have a message today for the tyrants of Tehran. Israel knows what they are doing, and Israel knows where they are doing it. Israel will never let a regime that calls for our destruction develop nuclear weapons — not now, not in 10 years, not ever. And Israel will do whatever it must do to defend itself against Iran's aggression. We will continue to act against it in Syria. We will act against it in Lebanon. We will act against it in Iraq. We will act against it whenever and wherever we must. We must act to defend our State and to defend our people.

Three years ago, a few weeks after the nuclear deal was completed, I asked this question from this very podium: does anyone seriously believe that flooding Iran's radical theocracy with weapons and cash will curb its appetite for aggression? But many of the deal's supporters believed just that. They believed that Iran's regime would become more moderate, more peaceful. They believed that Iran would use the billions of dollars it received in sanctions relief to improve the lives of

its people — solving the water problem, the trucking problem, the electricity problem and improving hospitals and schools. That is what they believed. Perhaps some people here today also believed that.

Well, it did not happen. Instead, Iran used the money to fuel its vast war machine. Just this past year, Iran has attacked Kurds in Iraq, slaughtered Sunnis in Syria, armed Hizbullah in Lebanon, financed Hamas in Gaza, fired missiles into Saudi Arabia and threatened the freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Bab El-Mandeb. That is some peace, some moderation.

If people think that Iran's aggression has been confined to the Middle East, they need to think again. Last month, two Iranian agents were arrested for plotting terror attacks here in the United States, and several weeks ago, Iranian agents were arrested for plotting terror attacks in the heart of Europe. Yet while the United States is confronting Iran with new sanctions, Europe and others are appeasing Iran by trying to help it bypass those new sanctions.

Now, I have just used a tough word, a very strong word: appeasement. I use it reluctantly. But unfortunately that is exactly what we are seeing again in Europe. We need to think about that. The same week that Iran was caught red-handed trying to murder European citizens, European leaders were rolling out the red carpet for President Rouhani, promising to give Iran even more money. As the son of a historian, I have to ask — and I ask it not merely as a historian's son, but as a Jew, a citizen of the world and someone who has lived through the twentieth century — have these European leaders learned nothing from history? Will they ever wake up?

We in Israel do not need a wake-up call, because Iran threatens us every day. Despite the best of hopes — and there were many hopes around the nuclear deal — that deal did not push war further away. It brought it ever closer to our borders. In Syria, Iran is trying to establish permanent military bases against us and has already launched missiles and drones into our territory. In Gaza, Iran is arming terror groups to launch rocket attacks on our cities and terror attacks on our civilians. In Lebanon, Iran is directing Hizbullah in the building of secret sites for converting inaccurate projectiles into precision-guided missiles that can hit targets deep inside Israel with an accuracy of within 10 metres.

The Assembly needs to listen to this. Hizbullah is deliberately using the innocent people of Beirut as human shields. It has placed three of these missile-conversion sites alongside Beirut's international airport. I can show a picture that is worth a thousand missiles. In it, we can see Beirut's international airport, the first missile site, which is in the Ouzai neighbourhood, on the water's edge, a few blocks away from the runway. There is also a second site, which is underneath a soccer stadium, two blocks away, and a third site, which is adjacent to the airport itself, right next to it.

I therefore have a message for Hizbullah today. Israel also knows what it is doing. Israel knows where it is doing it. And Israel will not let it get away with it. Just as supporters of the nuclear deal were wrong about what would happen when sanctions were removed, they were dead wrong about what would happen when sanctions were restored. They argued that United States sanctions alone would have little economic impact on Iran. That is what they said. It is hard to believe.

Let us take a look at what has happened to Iran's economy now that President Trump has forced companies to choose between doing business with Iran and doing business with the United States, whose gross domestic product is 50 times the size of Iran's gross domestic product. A year ago, Iran's economy was booming. Now it is collapsing. Iran's currency is plummeting. Inflation and unemployment are soaring. British airlines, German banks, French oil companies, Japanese oil importers and many others are scrambling to get out. If that is little economic impact, we can imagine what will happen with the next batch of United States sanctions, which will be imposed in November.

The deal's supporters were also wrong when they argued — and it is hard to believe that they argued this, despite the fact that I have had many arguments with them — that restoring sanctions would rally the Iranian people around the regime. While they are definitely rallying, their rallying is definitely not around the regime. They are rallying against the regime. They are not chanting "Death to America". They are chanting "Death to the dictator". They are not chanting "Export the Islamic Revolution". They are chanting "Leave Syria", "Leave Lebanon", "Leave Gaza", and "Take care of us in Iran".

I listen to those protests. I talk to Iranian people. I show videos and get so many responses — from Iranians. At first, I thought they were Iranian exiles — in the

safety of London or Paris or Los Angeles. No, these are Iranians from Iran, embracing Israel, criticizing their regime — that is an understatement — with their names. Shortly after the protests broke out, I asked my intelligence people, "What is going on?"

Those protests are an indicator of something extraordinary that has been taking place there. Through those protests, the Iranian people are showing unbelievable courage. The protests are now embracing the whole of Iran — from the urban centres to distant villages, from the striking merchants in the bazaars to the young women uncovering their hair. The people of Iran are bravely standing up to a regime that has brutally repressed them for four decades and that has squandered — and still squanders — their money in bloody wars across the Middle East.

This is what I say to Europe's leaders and to others. Instead of coddling Iran's dictators, join the United States and Israel and most of the Arab world in supporting new sanctions against a regime that endangers all of us across the world.

Israel is deeply grateful to President Trump for his bold decision to withdraw from the disastrous nuclear deal with Iran. A great many of our Arab neighbours are also grateful. And everyone who cares about the peace and security of the world should also be grateful.

But I have an important confession to make. It may be surprising, but I have to admit that the Iran deal has had one positive consequence, an unintended but positive consequence. By empowering Iran, it has brought Israel and many Arab States closer than they have ever been before, in an intimacy and friendship that I have not seen in my lifetime and that would have been unimaginable a few years ago.

When friendships are formed around a threat or a challenge, opportunities are quickly seen, not just for security but for how to bring a better life to our peoples, which is what Israel can and wants to contribute to. Israel deeply values those new friendships, and I hope the day will soon arrive when Israel will be able to expand peace, a formal peace, beyond Egypt and Jordan to other Arab neighbours, including the Palestinians. I look forward to working with President Trump and his peace team to achieve that goal.

I also want to take the opportunity now, here at *the United Nations, a place I know something about* because many years ago I served here as Ambassador for many years, to express Israel's appreciation to President Trump and Ambassador Haley for the unwavering support they have provided to Israel at the United Nations. They have unequivocally backed Israel's right to defend itself. They rightly pulled out of a history-denying UNESCO and a morally bankrupt Human Rights Council. I think that more resolutions about Israel than about the rest of the world combined have been introduced in those bodies, and tenfold the number of resolutions on Iran, Syria or any other State. It is not even fair to say "tenfold", because there are no multiples of zero.

President Trump and Ambassador Haley also stopped funding an unreformed United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, an organization that perpetuates the Palestinian refugee problem instead of solving it. Day after day, the Trump Administration has stood up to what has long been a specialty here at the United Nations, slandering Israel. Even though the shameful resolution 3379 (XXX) comparing Zionism to racism was repealed 25 years ago, I am sorry to say that its foul stench still clings to these halls.

Israel airlifted Ethiopian Jews to freedom and a new life in Israel, in the Jewish State. Yet here at the United Nations Israel is absurdly accused of racism. Israel's Arab citizens vote in our elections, serve in our Parliament, preside over our courts and have exactly the same individual rights as all other Israeli citizens. Yet here at the United Nations Israel is shamefully accused of apartheid. Today there are at least five times as many Palestinians as there were in 1948, the year of Israel's founding. Yet here at the United Nations Israel is outrageously accused of ethnic cleansing. Do those here know what that is? It is the same old anti-Semitism with a brand-new face. That is all it is.

Once it was the Jewish people who were slandered and held to a different standard; today it is the Jewish State that is slandered and held to a different standard. Here is an example. Take the outlandish attacks that have been levelled against Israel after our Knesset, our Parliament, recently adopted a law declaring Israel the nation-State of the Jewish people. Nevertheless, Israel is a free country. People can oppose that law, and people have done so. People can call for different wording in this or that clause, or add or delete a clause. People can do that.

But when Israel is called racist for making Hebrew its official language and the Star of David its national flag, when Israel is labelled an apartheid State for declaring itself the nation-State of the Jewish people — that is downright preposterous. And does the Assembly know why? Because represented in the Hall today are more than 100 countries that have only one official language, even though many other languages are commonly spoken within those countries. There are more than 50 countries here that have crosses or crescents on their flags, even though they have many non-Muslims and non-Christians living in their midst. And there are dozens of countries that define themselves as nation-States of a particular people, even though there are many ethnic and national minorities within their borders. None of those countries have been denigrated or libelled for celebrating their unique national identity. Only Israel is denigrated. Only Israel is libelled. What is unique about the Jewish people is not that we have a nation-State. What is unique is that many still oppose our having a nation-State.

Moments ago, President Abbas outrageously said that Israel's nation-State law proves that Israel is a racist, apartheid State. President Abbas should know better. He wrote a dissertation denying the Holocaust. His Palestinian National Authority imposes death sentences on Palestinians for selling land to Jews. Let me repeat that. If a Jew buys an apartment or a piece of land anywhere in the Palestinian territories, the Palestinian who sold him that land is executed. That is what the law says. President Abbas proudly pays Palestinian terrorists who murder Jews. In fact, the more they slay, the more he pays. That is in their law too. Then how can he condemn Israel's morality and call Israel racist?

That is not the way to peace. That is not the way to achieve the peace that we all want and need and to which Israel remains committed. This body should not be applauding the Head of a regime that pays terrorists. The United Nations should condemn such a despicable policy. And the United Nations, which brokered an Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire in 2014, should demand that Hamas release our fallen soldiers Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin. The latter was kidnapped when Hamas violated that very ceasefire. Hamas should also release the two Israeli citizens whom it holds captive, Avera Mengistu and Hisham Al-Sayed.

Every time I stand here I feel as I do today. I am privileged to stand here as the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, a Jewish and democratic State. Some believe that Israel cannot be both Jewish and democratic. That is false. Israel is both, and Israel will always remain both. Ever since Abraham and Sarah made their journey to the promised land, nearly 4,000 years ago, the land of Israel has been our homeland. It is the place where Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Leah and Rachel carried out their eternal covenant with God. It is where Joshua made us a sovereign nation, where David ruled and Isaiah preached, where the Maccabees fought and where Masada fell. It is the place from which we were exiled and to which we returned, rebuilding our ancient and eternal capital, Jerusalem. The nation-State of Israel is the only place where the Jewish people proudly exercise our collective right of self-determination. That right was recognized nearly a century ago by the League of Nations, and more than 70 years ago by the United Nations when it supported the establishment of a Jewish State. That is what resolution 181 (II) said, "a Jewish State".

At the same time, Israel is a vibrant democracy, where all its citizens, Jews and non-Jews alike, enjoy equal individual rights, and those rights are guaranteed by law. In Israel, whether a person is a Jew or an Arab, a Christian or a Muslim, a Druze or a Bedouin or anything else, that person's individual rights are exactly the same and will always remain the same. In the Middle East that is not obvious. Now that is an understatement. In the Middle East, where women are often treated as property, minorities are persecuted and gays are hanged, Israel stands out as a shining example of freedom and progress.

I could not be more proud to represent my country, Israel. I am proud that we have made Israel a global technological Power of breathtaking creativity in information technology and precision agriculture. Is the Assembly aware that we target the fertilizer and the water down to the individual plant — not to a field, not to part of a field, but down to the plant? I am proud of those geniuses that have brought those unbelievable developments in water management, cybersecurity, autonomous vehicles, digital health, medical devices and so many other fields that are improving the lives of billions of people around the world. I am proud of Israel's brilliant scholars, innovative entrepreneurs, talented artists, devoted teachers and compassionate doctors, and of our search-and-rescue teams who save lives from Haiti to Mexico, from Nepal to the Philippines. I am also proud of Israel's courageous soldiers, the men

and women who bravely defend our homeland while upholding the highest values. Most of all, I am proud of the people of Israel, who draw extraordinary strength from the deep wellsprings of our heritage, who possess an unbreakable spirit and who are as determined as ever to build a secure and magnificent future for the one and only Jewish State.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Israel for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Muscat (Malta): This summer we lost a great man, Kofi Annan. He stood for the need for Member States to be united in our approach if we wish to achieve the goals of the United Nations. That is why I am here addressing the General Assembly today, because I believe that global problems require global solutions. Advocating a global approach does not mean loving your country less than others. It means that working together makes it less likely that a might-is-right doctrine will prevail. Furthermore, better solutions can be found together, rather than alone.

In order to find solutions we must remain committed to communicating and understanding one another. Whatever challenges we need to address and however different each nation's views and perspectives are, we have a better chance at solving them as a united force, rather than divided or on our own. Malta, being a member of both the European Union and the Commonwealth, knows only too well that no single nation, big or small, can tackle global problems alone.

The trend of nations drifting towards reactions based only on their own borders is a worrying one. Some, unfortunately, are wanting to solve global issues with local solutions, which, as many here recognize, can at best give the illusion of working for a limited period of time, and at worst lead to almost immediate implosion.

We must, of course, respect the sovereignty of all nations, and we have no right to stand here before the Assembly hoping to judge others. But those who are closing themselves off from debate believe falsely that they can escape certain issues. We are seeing divisions not just among global leaders or nations, but within our own societies, neighbourhoods and even families. Local solutions breed global problems, which then manifest themselves with devastating results, from the use of plastic products that are polluting our seas to the point that they are killing our sea life, to mass migrations and the effect of displacement on both migrants and host societies, where there are vulnerable people on both sides.

I mention those examples because both of them have hit us particularly hard in Malta and in the Mediterranean Sea. The latter is visible to all. We are in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, in the middle of the route between North Africa, Libya and mainland Europe, the centre of a journey that thousands of people have undertaken in recent years. We have been grappling with complexities that have existed for years — much longer than has been recognized on a priority basis by the international community — and that have dominated media headlines in Europe and beyond. Although crossings through the central Mediterranean have decreased in the past year, the concerns of our populations have grown. And many feel the international community has failed to provide solutions for them. That has given rise to movements that preach simplistic solutions to complex problems.

What can surely be stopped, if we have a unified approach, are the criminal gangs profiting from smuggling human beings. With a global strategy that can deliver incisive blows to migrant smugglers, we can disrupt their online recruitment efforts, their payment methods and their supply of sea vessels. Most important, working together, we can stop the people profiting from a practice that has often resulted in the deaths of so many innocent people.

Malta is a small State that has one of the highest rates of economic growth in Europe and in the world, but that also ranks among the highest worldwide in terms of the number of asylum applications per capita. Despite that, our humanitarian response is still fully in

line with our international commitments. That is also true for Malta's embarkation policy, which has been consistent and clear. And we expect others, not only States but also the non-State actors involved, to abide by international rules.

In recent weeks — because of the actions of a few who have not abided by the relevant conventions — Malta had to bring together like-minded nations with a humanitarian conscience to offer a place of safety for stranded migrants. We had no legal obligation to do so, but we did it in a spirit of seeking unified solutions. And it proved that when solidarity works, complex issues can often have simple solutions. Although I am under no illusion and know that this was just a temporary respite in a much bigger problem, such actions could provide a foundation for long-term solutions, if all European Union member States could come together in a solution resembling a Bretton Woods-style institutional arrangement for addressing and managing migration with international support.

The soon to be adopted global compact on migration, which aims to establish a new global migration governance architecture on the principle of shared international responsibilities and solidarity, is a welcome move in the right direction. But it is a milestone on the road rather than the end of the road. We must now walk the talk by engaging in operational action.

Narratives that use inflated or false facts and thrive on a nation's fear of openness have led to painful outcomes in history, not only producing the obvious effects but also affecting the dynamics of international relationships, which overflow into other issues with devastating results. The current surge in nationalism and tighter border controls threatens to do just that, with the potential for obstructing democratic decisions fuelling extremism of all kinds.

However, let us take some comfort in knowing that in the 73 years of the existence of the United Nations, the going has always been tough. In fact, those who have stood where I am standing today have faced much worse crises, from wars and famines to injustice and killer diseases. But through unified approaches, solutions were found and nations survived. Each time we came together we emerged stronger as an institution, as a global community. We currently live in a world with fewer wars and more dialogue and cooperation than ever before.

But our work is not done, and it probably never will be. Although fewer people live in extreme poverty, that scourge has not been eradicated. We have found solutions to many life-threatening diseases, yet cures are still needed for others. Injustice remains, and climate change could be the greatest threat to life in our history. As we solve one issue, another replaces it. That is life. However, the important thing is that we continue to strive and work towards the greater good. But we can only do that together.

One way forward that Malta advocates is the harnessing of new technologies, which offer endless possibilities. We are currently in exciting technological times. With the lightning pace of current technological advances, each incredible piece of innovation could hold a new solution to problems that may have persisted for decades — from advanced robotics and artificial intelligence to 3D printing and the Internet of things.

Clearly, the fast and obvious transition to the digital economy and society poses challenges, which have to do with the very nature of concepts that we believed would stay as they were forever. One of them is the nature of work — how we envisage it, how we compensate it, how we maximize its efficiency and how the State creates new safety nets. That is a conversation that has just started globally, but that will shape public debate during our lifetime.

We can take the antagonistic view that technological progress is bad for us, that it will lead to new types of poverty, that it will strip people of their rights or even take decisions out of our hands. While such concerns may serve the needs of some politicians in the short term, and even appeal to well-meaning people who are afraid that progress will cost them their jobs or even more, such an approach is as myopic as advocating in the past that horse-drawn carts should not be replaced by motor vehicles.

Whether we are talking about immigration or technology, we do not arrive at solutions by closing doors. The digital economy should be seen as an opportunity, but we must realize that we cannot do the best job of harnessing its opportunities without evolving the current social contracts we have in place. Those who will be able to pair the digital economy with a new State, the digital State, will be best poised to have a future-proof society in which change does not galvanize extremes but helps to ensure further decades of sensible, mainstream policymaking and prosperity.

Mr. Beleffi (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Then there are the other big questions for which the dawn of the digital age requires answers. Can we solve diplomatic negotiations that are at a stalemate by applying algorithms that can avoid war? Can we disarm terrorists by using the latest technologies? Is it possible to know immediately which remote parts of our planet need international humanitarian assistance? Could we create new organs for people so that no one on a waiting list dies for lack of a donor? Can we look forward to the day when humankind can be told that there is a cure for all cancers?

Only time will tell. But it is the accessibility of advanced technologies that will lead to solutions, hopefully for the whole world. I believe passionately that technology can revolutionize and improve systems. That is why we have launched Malta as the blockchain island by being the first jurisdiction worldwide to regulate that new technology, which previously existed in a legal vacuum. Blockchain makes cryptocurrencies, the inevitable future of money, more transparent, since it helps to separate good business from bad.

But such distributed-ledger technologies can do much more. They can provide solutions to health-care systems in which patients have real ownership of their medical records. Emissions-trading systems can be taken to the next level. We can help to verify that humanitarian assistance is reaching its intended destination. We can make sure that people are not deprived of their legitimate property because of compromised data. Corporations will be able to become more accountable to their shareholders. States will have to move from hoarding information on citizens to regulating an environment where citizens trust the handling of their data.

Those are just a few of the ways in which we can counter regressive and reactionary politics. This forum shows that we stand to gain through dialogue and cooperation, which will always triumph over division and self-absorption because in unity we can have hope.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Georgia.

Mr. Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bakhtadze (Georgia) (*spoke in Georgian: English text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour to address the General Assembly in my native tongue, Georgian, one of the most ancient languages of world civilization and an integral part of it.

Today is 27 September, an extremely troubling and painful date in my country's history. Twenty-five years ago today, the occupation of a historical part of Georgia started, turning into an extremely severe challenge for Georgia's newly established statehood. Ten years ago, the Russian Federation launched yet another large-scale military aggression against my country, which resulted in the full-scale occupation of Georgia's two historic and integral regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.

Ten years after that military aggression, our territories remain occupied. As a result of ethnic cleansing, 10 per cent of our population is still forcefully displaced, while the rights of hundreds of thousands of our citizens are being disregarded. The situation in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali regions is dire and alarming. The situation in the occupied territories is a humanitarian disaster of the worst kind. The growing militarization of those regions is in full swing, and depopulation is increasing by the minute. Because of the grave humanitarian, socioeconomic and human rights situation, the population in the occupied regions has dropped by a factor of four or five since the occupation began. Razor wire and other artificial barriers split families and violate fundamental human rights. Those who live along the occupation lines are even prevented from visiting houses of prayer and the graves of their ancestors. Our citizens are forbidden to educate their children in their native language. Abductions, torture and murder continue. Archil Tatunashvili, Giga Otkhozoria and 18-year-old Davit Basharuli are recent victims of such atrocities. Because of those and many other cruel offences, the Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili list

was created in order to record the names of those who have committed such egregious crimes. We believe that those on the list must be held accountable through applicable international law.

The occupation and blatant disregard of the rule of law has created serious challenges to the stability and security of Georgia and the wider region. Owing to the existing conflicts in the South Caucasus, even a minor incident may escalate into uncontainable unrest with subsequent serious consequences. The international community's firm support for the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict is critically important. The international community must stand together and strong in support of the principle of the sovereign equality of States and the inviolability of their internationally recognized borders, because only by observing the fundamental norms of international law and protecting human rights can we ensure peace and security throughout the world.

Russia has yet to fulfil its international obligations and respect the 2008 ceasefire agreement reached through the mediation of the European Union (EU). We, on the other hand, have fulfilled that agreement down to the smallest detail and have assumed the legally binding obligation not to use force. That affirms our irreversible policy of seeking an exclusively peaceful resolution of the conflict. I therefore urge the Russian Federation to fulfil the international obligations that it has signed and withdraw its occupation forces from Georgia's territory.

We are actively trying to use the format of the Geneva international discussions, but our attempts at the negotiation table have met with unfounded and absolutely unacceptable resistance from Russia. I would like to reiterate that we attach special importance to the role of the United Nations in the Geneva talks, which the United Nations co-chairs along with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the EU.

In the twenty-first century, as people, nations and cultures strive for greater integration and development, the installation of artificial barriers and barbed wire are absolutely unacceptable. We want to break the deadlock in the relations between Russia and Georgia, but that can be accomplished only through respect for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty and the principles of international law. Despite the injustice that we have suffered, our only response to these challenges has been to continue our quest for peace and Georgia's development. We have proposed a new peace initiative designed to overcome the humanitarian disaster in the occupied territories and create new opportunities for our citizens there. With that initiative, we are fighting to stop the process of depopulation in the occupied territories and ensure respect for people's fundamental human rights. We call that initiative "A Step to a Better Future", and it seeks precisely to provide the populations in the occupied territories with access to health care and educational services and to create opportunities for income-generating activities for them so that they can feed their families and ensure their physical survival.

Today, from this rostrum, I would like to address our Abkhaz and Ossetian compatriots. Georgia's every success is their success. We share a common historical past, which must pave the way for our future, which I am convinced will bring us peace and prosperity. It is the Georgian authorities' duty to protect and guarantee the rights of every citizen, and we are irreversibly committed to fulfilling that duty. They should enjoy all the benefits put in place by Georgia, whether regarding human rights, education, health care or visa-free travel to Europe. I would particularly like to address young people there. Together, through joint efforts and pursuing opportunities, we can achieve success and prosperity. I want the youth to know that it is only in unity with them that we see our future. And I would once again like to urge Russia not to undermine or compromise our peace initiatives and to make it possible for the citizens in the occupied territories to lead a decent life.

With its rich culture and ancient history, Georgia has always stood with the world's civilized nations and contributed to the development of European and global civilizations. Accordingly, we remain engaged in the fight against the challenges facing humankind. Today, unfortunately, that list is quite long. It includes conflicts, terrorism, migration and forced displacement, climate change, poverty and grave human rights violations. Addressing those issues requires enormous efforts and strong political will on the part of the United Nations and each Member State. Each and every one of us must confront those challenges in order to make the world a better place. We strongly believe that the pursuit of national interests in the modern world should be based on mutual respect and should in no way be carried out at the expense of others. It is in that context that I would like to echo the theme of this year's session of the General Assembly and reaffirm that we are committed to making our contribution to our shared

goal of peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, and to strengthening the role of the United Nations by helping it to make progress in achieving its goals.

In establishing a democratic republic, a century ago, Georgia made its civilizational choice to define the future of our nation. We belong in the common European family. That choice remains unchanged and is yet another strong argument confirming our European identity. Georgia, with its values and contributions, has always been an organic part of Europe, as shown by its successful cooperation with the EU.

When Georgia declared independence, a century ago, its Constitution was built on the very values and principles that remain relevant and progressive even today. Suffice it to say that a century ago the multiparty Georgian Parliament included five women, an achievement rarely found even among the established democracies of that time. This year my country is celebrating the 100th anniversary of that event, the declaration of our democratic republic. Georgia regained its independence 27 years ago and embarked on a path to building a modern democratic State. It may not seem like a long time in historical terms, but our young democracy has faced numerous trials and tribulations over that period. Today's Georgia is the heir and successor to the values enshrined a century ago.

Georgia's progress in recent years in terms of democratic consolidation, respect for human rights and strengthening the rule of law is the unequivocal result of its fundamental reforms. Our strong Parliament, non-partisan President, independent judiciary and effective Government are the outcome of our successful constitutional reform, and the country is therefore switching to a European parliamentary model of governance. For us, the country's development fully focuses on free human beings and on human capital created by those free human beings. Our ambitious education reforms and modernization of the education system will be yet another breakthrough on the path to overcoming the challenges that we face today. Only educated, motivated, confident young people can bring about progress, eliminate poverty and ensure that Georgia joins the developed and innovative economies. A small, flexible and effective Government is counterbalanced by strong public and institutional mechanisms of control and civil society, which perfectly reflects our commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 16.

Georgia's election last year as Chair of the Open Government Partnership was a recognition of our country's achievements, bearing witness to the effectiveness of the efforts that have brought our society concrete results. Protecting fundamental human rights and dignity is our top priority. In that regard, Georgia has emerged as the region's leading reformer in recent years. Especially noteworthy is the fact that we have overcome a major challenge in the penitentiary system that we inherited. Most notably, we have made visible progress with regard to the respect for human rights in prisons. We have implemented important judicial reforms, which we intend to continue by launching the next wave of reforms. One of the main achievements of our political action has been to establish media freedom and media pluralism. In 2018, Georgia further improved its position in the World Press Freedom Index, and we have exceptional achievements in the area of Internet freedom.

Civil society plays a definitive role in the process of building democracy. Without a strong civil society, especially in a young democracy, a country's harmonious development is unimaginable. We want an independent, strong, and active civil society to develop in our country. Under our sustainable development policy, we have prioritized green policies and a green economy. At the same time, we are developing a digital economy poised to advance the country to a qualitatively new level. Our economic strategy relies on inclusive economic development and economic growth, which are being reflected in the well-being of each citizen. We have been successfully implementing that strategy, aimed at transforming Georgia into the region's economic, tourism, logistics and educational hub, as evidenced by our leading positions in reputable international rankings.

Our country's unique geography and strategic location between Europe and Asia have positioned Georgia for centuries as an attractive meeting place for civilizations and cultural dialogue. We continue to fulfil that function, and we are implementing ambitious and crucial new projects to that end. A few years ago, we addressed the world from this rostrum and offered to host the Silk Road Forum in Georgia. We have not only made the Forum a reality but have also reclaimed Georgia's historical role in the wider Silk Road region. Today, however, I would like to propose a new initiative and offer to facilitate the Tbilisi Forum, focusing on transforming the Black Sea region and the

Caucasus, which are currently areas of confrontation and challenges, into a space for peace, cooperation, and development.

Georgia's every achievement, its democratic and economic development and leading regional position in various areas are the result specifically of our European and Euro-Atlantic choice, which is enshrined in the Constitution and the relevant parliamentary resolutions. NATO-Georgia relations have become very dynamic and comprehensive. Georgia is a NATO-aspirant country and an enhanced opportunities partner, as well as the largest per capita contributor of troops to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, thereby contributing to the architecture of global security.

Everyone here is aware of the disturbing threat posed by transnational terrorism, which is much larger and more overwhelming today than ever before. Terrorism is the twenty-first century's common enemy. In the fight against that shared threat, Georgia has always stood, and will continue to stand, shoulder to shoulder with the international community. Unfortunately, many valiant Georgian soldiers have fallen in the global fight. We all agree that combating terrorism, along with preventing and responding adequately to that scourge, is possible only through joint efforts and shared responsibilities. I am convinced that we will defeat it.

Georgia's pain is not a problem facing one country alone. In 2008, the world perceived the aggression against Georgia as a problem in the relations between just two countries. The way things continued to unfold, however, showed that at the time the world was unprepared to adequately assess and respond to that aggression. Unfortunately, the United Nations proved ineffective in the face of that challenge. Today, the global security system is eroding before our very eyes. Today's world needs a stronger United Nations, and the international community needs institutions capable of properly evaluating and responding to today's challenges and preventing the risks that are undermining global security.

As Members know, the debates on reforming the United Nations began in the 1990s, although we must admit that we cannot see any serious success in that direction so far. That is why the issue of reforming the United Nations remains relevant, and I believe that it requires immediate action. As the world faces the challenges of a new era with problems yet to be identified, we all have the task of reacting to and jointly overcoming global challenges in order to ensure a peaceful and better world for future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc (*spoke in Vietnamese; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I am very honoured to deliver this statement during the general debate of the General Assembly at the beginning of its seventy-third session, whose theme has been chosen as "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies".

I should like to congratulate Ms. Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I believe that this session will be a great success under her leadership. I would also like to express my appreciation for the very important initiatives that Secretary-General Guterres has championed since taking office.

May I also, on behalf of the Government and people of Viet Nam, express my sincere gratitude to the General Assembly for the minute of silence observed in memory of the late President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, who recently passed.

Humankind has still not forgotten the scourge of the two World Wars of the twentieth century. However, since the birth of the United Nations in 1945, world wars have become a thing of the past. The foundations of peace on our planet have continued to be reinforced thanks to the efforts of the United Nations, the largest

multilateral organization where the largest number of countries meet. Over the past 70 years, the United Nations has played an enormous role through its tireless efforts to preserve peace, prevent conflicts and wars and realize the purposes and principles of the Organization as codified in the Charter of the United Nations.

We have seen significant achievements in recent years in global cooperation and development, ranging from the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to reforms of the United Nations, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and the adoption and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The United Nations has also been vital in efforts to address global issues, including reducing poverty, protecting women and children, promoting human rights, improving health care, culture and education, preserving the environment and responding to climate change. Today the United Nations has truly become a symbol of global solidarity, the embodiment of humankind and progress and the place where our aspirations for a world of peace, prosperity and equality are realized.

Viet Nam has been a companion to the United Nations and contributed to the noble goals pursued by the Organization over the past 70 years. We are a staunch supporter of the central role of the United Nations in the multilateral international system and have actively joined in efforts to realize its fundamental cooperation pillars — the maintenance of global peace and security, development cooperation and the protection and promotion of human rights.

Once a poor, underdeveloped country with a food deficit, over the past 20 years Viet Nam has recorded average annual gross domestic product growth of more than 6 per cent to become one of the world's largest food exporters. Since 2010, we have been a middle-income developing country, and the living standards of our nearly 100 million citizens have improved dramatically. By actively engaging in international integration, Viet Nam enjoys free trading relations with nearly 60 major countries and partners in the world through its membership of 16 free trade agreements.

Most recently, we successfully hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation throughout 2017, the 132nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2015, the 2018 World Economic Forum on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the sixth Greater Mekong Subregion Cooperation Summit in 2018. We are also working towards the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, which aims to strengthen ASEAN centrality in the evolving regional architecture. Viet Nam has also taken the initiative and taken part in many important United Nations mechanisms, contributing responsibly in many different areas.

Viet Nam is also making greater efforts to promote justice and sustainable development, foster equality and support for disadvantaged groups, protect the environment and ensure rights for all citizens, while upholding a spirit of dialogue and cooperation in the area of human rights. We have always attached importance to preserving cultural and natural heritage and national identity. We are one of the few countries to have accomplished many of the Millennium Development Goals ahead of schedule, particularly for poverty reduction.

We have made it our consistent policy to uphold the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles of international law with regard to the settlement of international disputes through peaceful means. That includes in the South China Sea, where there are issues that should be addressed on the basis of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the need to safeguard maritime security and safety and the freedom of navigation and overflight.

Cooperation and assistance from the international community, including the United Nations, has been extremely valuable for Viet Nam in its efforts to achieve sustainable development, international integration and poverty reduction. On this occasion, I would like, on behalf of the Vietnamese Government and people, to express my sincere gratitude to the United Nations and all countries and international organizations that have lent their active and effective assistance to Viet Nam.

Our planet is experiencing rapid change, propelled by the scientific and technological breakthroughs of the fourth industrial revolution as well as the irreversible trend of globalization. That opens up a range of new opportunities to guide humankind into a new era of economic growth unprecedented in the history of our civilization, further bolstering the main global currents of peace, cooperation and development.

Yet the world is also facing immense new challenges. World peace has yet to be guaranteed, although the situation on the Korean peninsula has

seen new progress. In the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere, conflict, or the threat of conflict, is ongoing, and immigration remains a pressing matter for many countries. Power politics, the use or threat of force and the rise of unilateral measures continue to pose threats to international peace and stability. Injustice and inequality remain in many parts of the world. Risks and instabilities are ever-present in global development. The effects of climate change and environmental pollution are widespread. Poverty is still a major challenge, with nearly 750 million people still living in extreme poverty, among whom are many children suffering from hunger and deprivation without access to health care or proper education.

No single nation, regardless of its might or wealth, can single-handedly address those enormous global challenges. They require the common efforts and collaboration of all nations. I would like to suggest that a concept of dual responsibility should be universally upheld. Each nation should take additional responsibility for addressing global issues, and each individual should take additional responsibility as a global citizen.

Against that backdrop, I share Secretary-General Guterres's view that the role of the United Nations has become all the more important in the creation of new foundations for more effectively addressing global challenges. We must continue highlighting the role of the United Nations and join hands for a world of peace, equality and sustainable development. In that process, it is my hope that the major Powers and developed countries will take meaningful action to play an exemplary role in maintaining peace and fostering development. The General Assembly should be the heart of cooperation among countries and peoples for peace, equality and sustainable development.

In that connection, we support lifting the unilateral embargo on Cuba, so that nation can exercise its freedom to participate equitably and fairly in economic and trading relations in accordance with international law.

Peace, freedom and prosperity have always been the desire and aspiration of all peoples. In the age of the fourth industrial revolution, humankind's progress is measured not only by feats of technological advancement but first and foremost by peace and prosperity. Even the smallest opportunity for peace must be cherished and nurtured. From its long struggle for freedom and independence, Viet Nam has a profound understanding of the value of peace, equality, self-determination, the right to the pursuit of happiness and the democratic values extolled by the Charter of the United Nations. The voices of small nations and the aspirations of the disadvantaged must be respected, heard and shared. That is the foundation for a sustainable and inclusive development that leaves no one behind. That is the foundation for social stability, which is needed to ensure the rights of every person and harness their creativity.

Today it is vital that the United Nations engage in strong and comprehensive reforms, improving its effectiveness, democracy and transparency, so as to better fulfil its indispensable role in leading efforts to address global challenges. As quoted by the Secretary-General in his opening remarks (see A/73/PV.6), the late Secretary-General Kofi Annan once said:

> "[W]e share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that, my friends, is why we have the United Nations." (*see SG/SM/7262*)

That is also the reason why, immediately after the establishment of the Vietnamese State on 2 September 1945, the beloved late President of the Vietnamese people, Ho Chi Minh, submitted a request for membership of the United Nations in January 1946.

I ask now what we want the United Nations to be. In answering that question, we must applaud the reform proposals that Secretary-General Guterres has initiated, particularly on repositioning the United Nations development system. I propose that the United Nations strengthen cooperation with the various regions of the world, particularly in terms of United Nations-ASEAN high-level cooperation mechanisms, which further highlight the role of the United Nations within ASEAN and vice versa.

Viet Nam takes pride in being an active member of the United Nations. Ours is a foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation and development, and multilateralism and diversification in our foreign relations, as well as active and engaged international integration. With that policy, we hope to make greater contributions to the creation of multilateral mechanisms and the fulfilment of the common responsibilities of the international community. For instance, Viet Nam has dispatched a level-2 field hospital to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

More recently, Viet Nam has submitted its candidacy for non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the 2020-2021 term. I would like

to express my heartfelt gratitude to the 53 countries of the Asia-Pacific States Group for endorsing Viet Nam as the sole candidate of the Group, and to many others for their extensive support for our candidature so far. In this most prestigious forum, I would like, on behalf of the Vietnamese Government and people, to call for, and very much hope to receive, the support of all Member States. Viet Nam is committed to being an active and responsible member of the international community and the United Nations.

We have every reason to believe that given our global partnership, solidarity and high level of commitment, the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will succeed, showing that we can live up to the aspirations of all humankind for a world of peace, equality and sustainable development. In that spirit, may the seventy-third session of the General Assembly be a resounding success.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica.

Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Holness (Jamaica): I warmly congratulate Ms. Espinosa Garcés on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Of the four women who have served as President over the years, she is the first from Latin America and the Caribbean. Jamaica is especially pleased that this honour has been conferred on such an eminent appointee from our region. We also share her desire to see a better gender balance in the presidency of the General Assembly in the years ahead. She can be assured of Jamaica's full support during her tenure.

The chosen theme for this session resonates well with us. It is imperative that we make the United Nations relevant to all people through global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.

This year it has been a decade since the global economic and financial crisis manifested itself in 2008. We are greatly encouraged by reports from international development partners that global growth has improved and unemployment has declined to its lowest since the crisis. We are, however, mindful that among developing economies, including small island developing States such as mine, growth prospects are becoming more uneven.

We remain vulnerable to a gamut of social, economic, environmental, financial and trade-related hazards, from within and beyond our borders. In that context, Jamaica's quest to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth and meaningful job creation has encountered challenges. Ten years on, we still face the vagaries of an uncertain and at times volatile global economic environment. Together with persistent challenges linked to climate change and more frequent intense weather events, those problems all impact the pace of our development.

Notwithstanding the multiple challenges that confront us individually or collectively, Jamaica is developing the social and political consensus it needs to pursue policies that will secure our economic independence. In the past decade, we have engaged in deep structural reform of our economy, reduced our debt profile from its previous very high level, transformed our energy sector and increased our social support for the most vulnerable. What has been the result? Our sovereign ratings and outlook have moved from negative to positive.

Jamaica is not sitting and waiting for the world to save it. As a small island developing State with numerous challenges, we are taking our destiny into our own hands. Ultimately, we believe that economic independence will secure our resilience. Nevertheless, we continue to strengthen traditional partnerships and

build new ones with like-minded countries around the world that see the global benefits generated when countries big and small, rich and poor, work together to solve issues too big for any of us to solve alone.

This year, Jamaica was pleased to be invited to represent the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at outreach sessions of the Group of Seven and the Summit of the BRICS group of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. We have also represented CARICOM throughout the year at meetings of the Group of 20 under the Argentine presidency. Those forums represent extremely influential groupings of countries. Jamaica believes that such groupings provide a unique opportunity, working alongside international development partners, to address the problems faced by weaker economies across the globe. Jamaica therefore welcomes the opportunity to share perspectives with our stronger economic partners to ensure that they gain an understanding of the risks that we face in our region of small developing States, most of which are island States.

Jamaica stands ready to continue working on how we can transform global thinking and together find effective solutions within a fair, rules-based multilateral system that is supportive of policies that seek to ensure the emergence and empowerment of small and developing States, truly leaving no country — and no one — behind.

Our concerted action must embody effective strategies to bolster the global financial system through a robust global campaign to identify funding for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and resilience and adaptation measures to address the devastating effects of climate change and natural disasters. Jamaica and our CARICOM brothers and sisters do not have the luxury of engaging in a philosophical debate on whether or not climate change is real. The issue is existential for us. Major storms are no longer uncommon; they have given way to superstorms. They are stronger and more frequent. Every year, the Caribbean region, running right up to the south-eastern coast of the United States of America, lives in fear for five months — five months of hoping that the devastation that was wreaked on North Carolina, Antigua and Barbuda, Texas and Grenada is not visited upon them this year.

Have Member States seen what has happened to Dominica? The disaster wreaked by those superstorms is the closest thing that we can imagine or compare to a nuclear event. After four hours of one hurricane, Dominica lost most of its gross domestic product (GDP). The people of that small island are still recovering today.

As the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (A/73/268) confirms, last year we witnessed the costliest North Atlantic hurricane season yet, with losses estimated at $229 billion. Furthermore, the economic cost of climate-related disasters globally was $320 billion.

With special reference to the issue of climate change, I was particularly honoured by the invitation from Secretary-General Guterres to join him and President Macron of France in leading a special initiative to mobilize funds committed at the Copenhagen Summit in 2009 to the amount of $100 billion per year until 2020. We are only two years away from the deadline but as of today we are nowhere near the target. We must therefore galvanize an effective mobilization campaign. Against that background, my delegation looks forward to the climate change summit to be convened by the Secretary-General in 2019. More specifically, I am also personally committed to working assiduously to strengthen momentum aimed at securing the promised resources to address climate-related issues, which affect all of us.

Many of the structural factors that impede our ability to narrow the persistent income gap between developing and advanced economies can be addressed through the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Global estimates of the scale of the SDGs financing gap run on the order of from $5 trillion to $7 trillion per annum. Meaningful progress in that regard will require us to tap into various sources of funding. I cannot overstate the importance of including innovative ways of mobilizing private-sector financing.

In addition, several small island developing States like Jamaica are deemed to have graduated to middle-income status primarily by virtue of their GDP per capita. Many of them, however, are highly indebted and vulnerable. High debt ratios constrain our ability to secure domestic fiscal resources at a reasonable cost for the implementation of national development goals. The reality is that even though many have made progress

in reducing levels of extreme poverty, several of our broader development efforts have stalled.

We therefore highly commend the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which has affirmed the importance of complementing the per-capita income criterion by addressing structural gaps that retard development prospects for middle-income countries. Accordingly, I am reiterating my call for international financial institutions to address that persistent problem known as the middle-income trap. We believe that a special initiative for highly indebted middle-income countries could provide the framework for the type of support that those countries require. It is our great hope that the United Nations high-level meeting on middle-income countries, scheduled for later this year, will give its fullest consideration to those matters and to ways in which the United Nations system can provide better support.

In the interim, Jamaica continues to work with partners like Canada to provide a platform where countries can engage directly with actors in the private sector, development finance institutions and regulators. Our goal is to forge collaborative partnerships between United Nations Member States and the private sector in order to determine practical, solution-oriented ways of securing new and long-term capital investment, utilizing a mix of public, private and blended financing to implement the SDGs.

Even as we diligently seek financing for sustainable development, we are mindful that we live in a world where international peace and security are under continued threat. The world has witnessed several terrorist attacks and is grappling with a range of conflicts that appear intractable. The Secretary-General has therefore appropriately emphasized conflict prevention as well as promoting a new disarmament agenda. As he has often said, we must confront issues concerning peace and security along a peace continuum, from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and sustainable long-term development.

Jamaica is especially interested in the efforts to build a secure environment by combating the illicit traffic and trade in small arms and light weapons. We have made significant national institutional changes, undertaken policy enhancements and adopted legislative amendments in the areas of security and justice in our own country. We now look forward to working with other Member States, the United Nations system and partners at all levels to ensure that the progress we have made is sustainable.

Societies function best when an inclusive global environment is created where no one feels left behind. The implementation of the SDGs must be people-centred. Embargoes and other financial and economic barriers must not become tools aimed at preventing people such as our neighbours the citizens of the Republic of Cuba from attaining their rightful development goals. Jamaica continues to call for a lifting of the embargoes on that country. We also believe that it is important to support the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoys in pursuing the political processes related to situations such as those in the Western Sahara, Syria and Myanmar.

As we prepare to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, let us continue to be mindful of the many among us who consistently face discrimination in various forms. Jamaica has been at the forefront of international human rights efforts, having been the first country to incorporate human rights into its foreign-policy strategy, a principle that we guard fiercely. We will never lose sight of the responsibility to promote and protect the interests of the vulnerable. We are especially keen to ensure that our women, children, persons living with disabilities, our elderly and young people can make meaningful contributions to a safe and prosperous society and reap its benefits. Jamaica will shortly become a member of the Economic and Social Council, which is currently presided over by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Our term of office will coincide with what promises to be a momentous year for that body. We are committed to advancing the work of the Council, including during its High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Societies are not sustainable without healthy citizens. As a region that has been severely affected by non-communicable diseases, we in the Caribbean are actively promoting and implementing measures to reverse that trend by encouraging health and wellness. I felt truly energized as I joined my CARICOM colleagues this morning in launching Caribbean Moves, a region-wide initiative aimed at raising awareness and increasing physical activity among our young people, as well as those who are not so young. We look forward to building on the outcomes of the high-level meeting that has been convened this week on

non-communicable diseases. Jamaica will also support ongoing actions to combat tuberculosis and promote universal health coverage.

The President of the General Assembly has challenged us to ensure that the United Nations remains a beacon of hope for each citizen across the globe. To that end, the United Nations must be responsive to an ever-changing and unpredictable world if it is to remain relevant and effective. The Secretary-General is correct in stating in his report on the work of the Organization that

> "one of the most valuable assets of the United Nations is its capacity to operate as a convener of people, a proponent of ideas, a catalyst for action and a driver of solutions." (*A/73/1, para. 1*)

For that reason, we remain steadfast in our support of efforts to reform the United Nations. We commend the Secretary-General's actions in pressing for reform of the peace and security architecture and the United Nations development system and its management and operational structure. Of course, we are ever-mindful of the words of our recently departed former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a stalwart of multilateral diplomacy, that no reform of the United Nations will be complete without reform of the Security Council.

Our global alliance comprises 193 sovereign States, but there is no denying the fact that we are all interdependent. A joint and multifaceted response is required to surmount the myriad hurdles ahead of us, for it is only through collaboration that we can build our societies and secure our common future. Our legacy must be one that uplifts and inspires. Let that therefore be our mandate for the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, and National Security and Intelligence of New Zealand

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, and National Security and Intelligence of New Zealand.

Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, and National Security and Intelligence of New Zealand, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, and National Security and Intelligence of New Zealand, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Ardern (New Zealand): *E nga mana nul o nga whenua o te ao/Tena koutou katoa/Nei ra te reo mihl maioha o Aotearoa/Tena tatau i nga kaupapa korero/Ka arahina e tatau/Me te ngakau pono/Me te kotahitanga o te tangata.*

My opening remarks were in Te Reo Maori, the language of the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. As is tradition, I acknowledged those who are here, why we are here and the importance of our work. It seems a fitting place to start.

As a leader attending my first General Assembly, I am struck by the power and potential that resides here. In New Zealand we have always been acutely aware of that. We are a remote nation at the bottom of the South Pacific. It takes three hours to reach our nearest neighbours by plane, and anywhere that takes less than 12 hours is considered close. I have no doubt, though, that our geographic isolation has contributed to our values.

We are a self-deprecating people. We are not ones for status. We will celebrate the local people who volunteer at their sports clubs as much as we will celebrate successful entrepreneurs. Our empathy and strong sense of justice are matched only by our pragmatism. We are, after all, a country made up of two main islands, one simply named North and the other South. For all of that, our isolation has not made us insular. In fact, our engagement with the world has helped shape who we are.

I am a child of the 1980s, a period in New Zealand's history where we did not just observe international events, we challenged them. Whether it was apartheid in South Africa or nuclear testing in the Pacific, I grew up learning about my country and who we were by the way that we reacted to international events. Whether it was taking to the streets or changing our laws, we have seen ourselves as members of a community, one that we have a duty to use our voice within.

I am an incredibly proud New Zealander, but much of that pride has come from being a strong and active member of our international community, not in spite of it. At the heart of that international community has been this place. Emerging from a catastrophic war, we have collectively established — through convention, charters and rules — a set of international norms and human rights. All of these are an acknowledgement that we are not isolated, that Governments do have obligations to their people and to one another and that our actions have a global effect.

In 1945, New Zealand's Prime Minister Peter Fraser said that the Charter of the United Nations offered perhaps a last opportunity to work in unison to realize the hope in the hearts of all of us, for a peace that would be real, lasting and worthy of human dignity. None of those founding principles should be consigned to the history books. In fact, given the challenges we face today and how truly global they are in their nature and impact, the need for collective action and multilateralism has never been clearer. And yet, for all of that, the debate and dialogue we hear globally is not centred on the relevance and importance of our international institutions. Instead, we find ourselves having to defend their very existence. That surely leaves us all with the questions of how we got here and how we get out.

If anything unites us politically in this place right now it is this: globalization has had a massive impact on our nations and the people we serve. While that impact has been positive for many, for others it has not. The transitions our economies have made have often been jarring and the consequences harsh. Alongside unprecedented global economic growth, we are still seeing a growing sense of isolation, dislocation and insecurity and the erosion of hope. As politicians and Governments, we all have choices in how we respond to those challenges. We can use the environment to blame nameless and faceless others, feed the sense of insecurity and retreat into greater levels of isolationism, or we can acknowledge the problems we have and seek to fix them.

In New Zealand, going it alone is not an option. Aside from our history, we are also a trading nation, and proudly so, but even without those founding principles, there are not just questions of nationhood to consider. There are generational demands on us too. It should hardly come as a surprise that we have seen a global trend of young people showing dissatisfaction with our political systems and calling on us to do things differently. Why would they not, when they themselves have had to adapt so rapidly to a changing world?

Within a few short decades, we now have a generation that will grow up more connected than ever before. Digital transformation will determine whether the jobs they are training for will even exist in two decades. In education or the job market, they will not just compete with their neighbours but with their neighbouring countries. This generation is a borderless one, at least in a virtual sense, and its members increasingly see themselves as global citizens. As their reality changes, they expect that ours will too, that we will see and understand our collective impact and that we will change the way we use our power.

If we are looking for an example of where the next generation is calling on us to make that change, we need look no further than climate change. Two weeks ago, Pacific Island leaders gathered together at the Pacific Islands Forum. It was at that meeting, in the small island nation of Nauru, that climate change was declared the single biggest threat to security in the Pacific. Please, just think about that for a moment. Of all the challenges we debate and discuss, rising sea levels present the single biggest threat to our region.

For those who live in the South Pacific, the impacts of climate change are not academic, or even arguable. They are watching the sea levels rise, the extreme weather events increase and the impact that has on their water supply and food crops. We can talk all we like about the science and what it means and what temperature rises we need to limit in order to survive, but there is a grinding reality in hearing people from a Pacific island talk about where the sea was when they were children and the potential loss of their entire village now that they are adults.

Our action in the wake of that global challenge remains optional, but the impact of inaction does not. Nations like Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands or

Kiribati — small countries that have contributed the least to global climate change — are suffering, and will suffer, the full force of a warming planet. If my Pacific neighbours do not have the option of opting out of the effects of climate change, why should we be able to opt out of taking action to stop it? Any disintegration of multilateralism and any undermining of climate-related targets and agreements are not interesting footnotes in geopolitical history. They are catastrophic.

In New Zealand we are determined to play our part. We will not issue any further offshore oil and gas exploration permits. We have set a goal of 100 per cent renewable energy generation by 2035, established a green infrastructure fund to encourage innovation and rolled out an initiative to plant 1 billion trees over the next 10 years. Those plans are unashamedly ambitious. The threat that climate change poses demands it. But we represent less than 0.2 per cent of global emissions. That is why, as a global community, not since the inception of the United Nations has there been a greater example than climate change of the importance of collective action and multilateralism. It should be a rallying cry for all of us.

Yet there is a hesitance that we can ill afford and a calculation of personal cost and self-interest. But that is not the only challenge where domestic self-interest is the first response and where an international or collective approach has been diluted at best, or rejected at worst. But it would be both unfair and naive to argue that retreating to our own borders and interests has meant turning our backs on a perfect system. The international institutions that we have committed to have not been perfect. But they can be fixed.

That is why the challenge I want to issue today is this: together, we must rebuild and recommit to multilateralism. We must redouble our efforts to work as a global community. We must rediscover our shared belief in the value, rather than the harm, of connectedness. We must demonstrate that collective international action not only works but is in all of our best interests. We must show the next generation that we are listening and have heard them.

But if we are truly going to take on a reform agenda, we must acknowledge the failings that have led us to this crossroads. International trade, for instance, has helped bring millions of people out of poverty around the world. But some have felt their standard of living slide. We in New Zealand have ourselves seen the hesitancy around trade agreements within our own population. The correct response is not to repeat the mistakes of the past and be seduced by the false promises of protectionism. Rather, we must all work to ensure that the benefits of trade are distributed fairly across our societies.

We cannot rely on international institutions to do that, in the same way that we cannot blame them if they have not delivered those benefits. It is incumbent on us to build productive, sustainable and inclusive economies and demonstrate to our peoples that, when done right, international economic integration can make us all better off. If we want to ensure that everyone is better off, surely we should start with the most vulnerable.

We in New Zealand have set ourselves an ambitious goal. We want to be the best place in the world to be a child. It is hardly the stuff of hard and fast measures — after all, how are play and a feeling of security and happiness measured? But we can measure material deprivation and poverty, and so we will. Moreover, we are making it a law that we report on those numbers every single year alongside our budgets. What better way is there to hold ourselves to account, and what better group to do that for than children?

But if we are focused on nurturing that next generation, we equally have to worry about what it is that we are handing down to them, including our environment. In the Maori language there is a word that captures the importance of that role, *kaitiakitanga*, which means guardianship. That is the idea that we have been entrusted with our environment and have a duty to care for it. For us, that has meant taking action to address degradation, such as setting standards to make our rivers swimmable, reducing waste and phasing out single-use plastic bags, right through to eradicating predators and protecting our biodiversity. The race to grow our economies and increase wealth makes us all the poorer if it comes at the cost of our environment. We in New Zealand are determined to prove that it does not have to be that way. But those are all actions and initiatives that we can take domestically that ease the blame and pressure on our international institutions. That does not mean they do not need fixing.

At the heart of the multilateral system, the United Nations must lead the way. We strongly support the Secretary-General's reform efforts to make the United Nations more responsive, effective and modernized so that it is capable of dealing with today's challenges.

We encourage him to be ambitious, and we stand with him in that ambition. But ultimately it is up to us, the Member States, to drive change here at the United Nations. That includes reforming the Security Council. If we want the Council to fulfil its purpose of maintaining international peace and security, its practices must be updated so that it is not hamstrung by the use of the veto.

New thinking will also be needed if we are to achieve the vision encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In New Zealand we have sought to embed the principles behind the SDGs in a new living-standards framework that is guiding policymaking and the management of our resources. We remain absolutely committed to supporting the rollout of the SDGs alongside international partners through a significant increase in our official development assistance budget.

But revitalizing our international rules-based system is not just about the mechanics of how we work together. It also means renewing our commitment to our values. The Charter of the United Nations recalls that the Organization was formed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which after two world wars had brought untold sorrow to humankind. If we forget that history and the principles that drove the creation of the United Nations, we will be doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past.

In an increasingly uncertain world it is more important than ever that we remember the core values on which the United Nations was built — that all people are equal, that all are entitled to have their dignity and human rights respected and that we must strive to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. We must consistently hold ourselves to account on each one.

In addition to renewing that commitment, though, we must acknowledge where accountability must continue, and that is especially the case when it comes to equality. So many gains have been made, and each is worthy of celebration. In New Zealand we have just marked the 125th year since women were granted the right to vote. We were the first country in the world to do so. As a girl I never grew up believing that my gender would stand in the way of my achieving whatever I wanted in life. I am, after all, not the first but the third female Prime Minister of New Zealand.

But for all of that, we still have a gender pay gap and an overrepresentation of women in low-paid work and as victims of domestic violence. And we are not alone. It seems surprising that in this modern age we should have to recommit to gender equality, but we do. I for one will never celebrate the gains we have made for women domestically while internationally other women and girls experience a lack of the most basic opportunities and dignity. #MeToo must become #WeToo. We are all in this together.

I accept that the list of demands, whether domestic or international, on all of us is long. We are operating in challenging times. We face what we in New Zealand would call wicked problems, ones that are intertwined and interrelated. Perhaps then it is time to step back from the chaos and ask what we want. It is in that space that we will find simplicity, the simplicity of peace, prosperity and fairness.

If I could distil it into one concept that we are pursuing in New Zealand it is simple and it is this: kindness. In the face of isolationism, protectionism and racism, the simple concept of looking outwardly and beyond ourselves and of kindness and collectivism might be just as good a starting point as any. Let us therefore start here, with the institutions that have served us well in times of need and will do so again.

In the meantime, I can assure everyone here that New Zealand remains committed to continuing to do its part in building and sustaining international peace and security; promoting and defending an open, inclusive and rules-based international order based on universal values; and being pragmatic, empathetic, strong and kind. The next generation, after all, deserves no less.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, and National Security and Intelligence of New Zealand for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, and National Security and Intelligence of New Zealand, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): One decade ago, the world was convulsed by a cataclysmic collapse of its economic order. The devastating global economic and financial crisis began in the boardrooms of greedy banks and spread worldwide, with a rapidity that exposed the shortcomings of an unethical and unregulated international financial architecture. The adverse socioeconomic impact of the crisis has been vast and far-reaching, especially for the countries least responsible for the genesis of the crisis.

Regrettably, the seemingly self-evident lessons of that economic and financial catastrophe have been distorted and manipulated to disastrous effect. While the financial architecture has been quietly reassembled, with little more than ineffectual cosmetic changes, the post-crisis socioeconomic and political landscape has been radically reordered. Economic difficulties have caused most of the major nations to look inward, eschewing the most noble and beneficial aspects of global cooperation. Craven demagogues, clothed in populist robes, have emerged to exploit economic hardship and fan the flames of division, hatred and isolation. In all corners of the globe, the jarring rise of illiberal intolerance can be causally connected to the economic crisis and its continuing impact.

Solidarity has been sacrificed on the altar of political expediency, illustrating the enduring prescience of the late Kofi Annan's observation that when economic conditions are difficult, people tend to be less generous and protect themselves. The question of solidarity does not mean much to them at that time. We have retreated from the ethos of integration, cooperation and consensus-building that not only animated the pre-crisis decade but is absolutely necessary to solve the global problems that confront us.

In a technologically connected, increasingly educated and rapidly shrinking global village, any belated attempt to put the genies of multilateralism and globalization back into their respective bottles is a dangerous folly. Walls cannot replace bridges, isolation cannot replace cooperation and clenched fists cannot shake hands.

The United Nations is not without its many systemic flaws, and the ascendancy of its unprincipled antithesis demands that we address those flaws urgently. However, after seven decades, the United Nations remains the world's only institution with the capacity and authority to enable global cooperation for our collective ennoblement.

The well-chosen theme for this general debate speaks to the relevance of the United Nations, global leadership and shared responsibility. It centres on a recommitment to the bedrock foundations of the Charter of the United Nations: sovereign equality, non-interference and non-intervention, international peace and security, respect for international law and collective cooperation in solving global problems. It is precisely when times are most tumultuous and when damaging changes are upon us that principles must be most unwavering and fundamental truths must be most vigorously upheld.

The principles of non-intervention and non-interference are of particular importance to small island developing States. Lacking military might or economic wealth, and constrained within narrow borders, we owe our existence as nation States to a global recognition and respect for the principle that no other nation — large or small, rich or poor, near or far — should be allowed to interfere in our sovereign affairs or intervene in matters properly resident in our domestic jurisdiction. Without strict adherence to those tenets, small States' existence dangles precariously on the threads of great-Power intrigue or changing

perceptions of our strategic significance. Without those principles, our international order reverts to barbarism, in which the strong are doing what they can and the weak merely suffering what they must. That is unacceptable.

Because of our undeniable reliance on that cornerstone of international law, small States are among its staunchest defenders. Every violation of the principle of non-intervention, wherever it may occur, is an indirect assault on our own survival. That principle is immutable, and no amount of heavy-handed coercion or ham-fisted inducements will cause us to abandon our overarching existential interests in pursuit of short-term appeasement. Our shared history of struggle against colonial oppression and exploitation informs not only our continuing pursuit of reparative justice for the victims of native genocide and slavery, but places us in implacable opposition to any actions by those who seek illegally to impose their will on independent nations and peoples.

As such, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines stands firmly against the continued interventionist assauits on the sovereignty of our neighbours in the Republic of Cuba and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The anachronistic economic blockade of Cuba is both illegal and unproductive. The time has long since passed for its complete repeal. We regret deeply that the fledgling rapprochement between the United States and Cuba has stalled, and we call for a resumption of mutually respectful dialogue between our two friends.

In Venezuela, the democratically elected Government has been subjected to an unacceptable, coordinated and intense external economic assault that indirectly has also had a debilitating effect on small Caribbean nations, which have had generous arrangements of solidarity, through the PetroCaribe agreements, for example. To be sure, Venezuela has enormous internal sociopolitical challenges, but unwarranted and illegal intervention is certainly counterproductive to the people's ongoing quest for peace, democracy and liberty. Venezuela needs a peace and reconciliation mission, not a campaign of sanctions, subversion and threats of armed intervention. Constructive dialogue between and among the contending parties and personalities is urgently required.

The peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean have repeatedly reaffirmed that our region is a zone of peace. Our peoples are not the pawns and playthings of any nation. Our America and our Caribbean defiantly affirm that. It is a noise in our blood, an echo in our bones.

No international organization is better suited than the United Nations to fulfilling its foundational Charter mandate of achieving international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian nature. Today, climate change is indisputably the defining, multifaceted existential problem that we are collectively confronting. However, the prospects for an effective international solution to climate change are rapidly receding. Our carefully calibrated climate accords are teetering on the brink of irrelevance, wounded not only by high-profile withdrawals but also by cynical and foolhardy non-compliance with voluntary mitigation pledges that major emitters have loudly declared but quietly disregarded.

The result of this ignoble hand-wringing and political procrastination is that the world continues to burn while its leaders fiddle. In the space of three years, our sister island of Dominica was twice devastated, by Tropical Storm Erika and Hurricane Irma, with Tropical Storm Isaac striking that island a glancing blow only weeks ago. As I speak, the threat of a storm hangs over my country. Beyond the headlines, the story of climate change is grimly told in daily experiences of floods, droughts, landslides, coastal erosion and lost lives and livelihoods across our region.

We can wait no longer. The constellation of challenges, externally caused, that faces our small States demands a focused global response that recognizes an undoubted small State exceptionalism in theory and in practice. The many-sided concept of small State exceptionalism ought to be placed at the centre of global discourse in order to prompt appropriate collective action.

The rising seas and intensifying storms pose an existential threat to small island developing States in particular. Major emitters that fail to set and honour ambitious mitigation pledges are committing a direct act of hostility against small island developing States, and we ought to resist their recklessness in acting against our interests.

Similarly, the financing of climate resilience and adaptation measures by our development partners cannot be shoehorned into the same glacially slow, labyrinthine bureaucratic processes that have stymied other cooperation initiatives. Our friends and partners

must recognize the fierce urgency of that unfamiliar and unprecedented climate threat and take decisive political and development action to arrest this extraordinary existential problem. Climate change cannot be handled by business-as-usual practices, however tried and true. Our global climate accords have birthed entities with the ostensible objectives of funnelling and delivering urgently needed mitigation and adaptation financing to the most vulnerable States. However, those entities place the promised support at the centre of an impenetrable web of unwieldy rules and processes that serve only to frustrate those most desperately in need of life-saving cooperation.

Similarly, the international commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals falters on the paucity of tangible global effort to ensure their achievement and timeline. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted and embedded within our national development plans. Despite limited resources, we have created both a zero-hunger trust fund and a disaster contingency fund, innovative and unique responses to our own sustainable development needs. We have mainstreamed and prioritized goals related to clean energy, economic growth, sustainability, climate action and biodiversity. We have chalked up home-grown progress in tandem with the selfless solidarity of some of our regional and global friends and allies, but much more must be done.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to seek new avenues for people-centred development and economic growth amid rapidly changing realities. The spectre of trade wars poses an immense threat to our development aspirations, as does the continual tightening of the procedural noose around the throat of our banking and financial-services industries. The prospect of de-risking and the loss of correspondent banking relationships is not an individual banking or business decision but a clear and present threat to the economic viability of many small States. The modern manipulation of States' access to global banking and finance mechanisms, whether informed by politics, stigma or indifference, is a flagrant violation of the internationally recognized right to development. It is imperialism of a most insidious kind, imposed facelessly from a distance. The United Nations must urgently confront that grave and gathering menace in a coordinated and action-oriented manner.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also making increasingly innovative forays into capitalizing on the vast potential of the blue economy, tourism, niche agricultural products and our historical knowledge in the medical cannabis industry. We seek the cooperation of our friends and partners in supporting such initiatives.

The faith of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the principles and potential of the United Nations is manifest in its active participation in all aspects of this organ. In recent years, we have demonstrated that small size is no impediment to impactful contributions on the world stage. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has played a leadership role in the post-financial crisis response of the United Nations, the revitalization of the General Assembly, Security Council reform, the advancement of the law of the sea, small-arms control, ambitious measures to combat climate change and the global response to non-communicable diseases. Most recently, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines chaired the Administrative and Budgetary Committee of the United Nations and currently serves as President of the Economic and Social Council.

In a similar manner, we feel the responsibility to bring our unique perspectives to bear on the work of the Security Council. The perspectives of small States, including small island developing States, have been historically the least heard in the Security Council. As threats to international peace and security have evolved in diverse ways, so too has the need increased for a diversity of viewpoints on the Security Council. Small island States have largely and spectacularly solved the challenge of forging peaceful, harmonious societies amid many of the social, ethnic, political, historical and cultural fissures that traditionally lie at the root of many breaches of international peace and security. We have confronted those challenges not with a surfeit of weapons or dollars, but with mutual respect, dialogue and an understanding that unique situations require not static ideological solutions, but flexibility and innovation geared towards the specificities of the issue at hand.

The need for more of that type of practical, principled pragmatism on the Security Council is self-evident. It is why the candidacy of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been endorsed by the States members of the Caribbean Community and why Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to call for reform of the membership of the Security Council to reflect modern realities and challenges.

Our pragmatism affords us the opportunity to see the world as it is, unencumbered by historical or ideological blinders. The United Nations, which justly counts States with populations as small as 10,000 people among its Members, somehow continues to remain blind to the 23 million residents of Taiwan. There is simply no principled basis to deny Taiwan the right to participate in the work of the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

The relevance of this institution is rooted in its responsiveness to the needs and challenges of the peoples we collectively represent. We can and must do more to address those needs in direct and transformative ways. We must ever more diligently work to match noble intent with decisive action in pursuit of our Charter objectives. Accordingly, we urge the practical resolution of the pain and suffering of the Palestinians, the people of Yemen and those afflicted by the evil of terrorism, whether State-sponsored or not. Similarly, the madness of the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of their use is a standing affront to humanity, peace and security, and therefore demands our continued collective response. Our international agenda for corrective action also includes trafficking in persons, illegal drugs and small arms, refugees from ravaged lands, violence against women and children, the growing scarcity of water and food in many nations, the war against chronic non-communicable diseases, the rising tide of religious intolerance in certain places and the reunification of families arising from abductions of yesteryear.

The President took the Chair.

We live amid frantic attempts in diverse quarters to rekindle the dying embers of xenophobia and unilateralism in pursuit of a past glory stuffed with mythology. But this noble institution is the keeper of a different flame. Our bedrock principles stand as an open rebuke to those who traffic in base triumphalism and pursue actions that are fueled by both short memories and short-sightedness. Ours is a flame of respect for sovereignty, diversity of views, dialogue, peace and development. In changing times, and amid new challenges, the principles that fuel that flame must be zealously defended. As keepers of that flame and as holders of those principles in trust for future generations, we cannot falter and be found wanting in the face of reactionary assaults. Another way is possible, and that way, that path, is lit by the timeless principles that continue to animate and invigorate the best efforts of the United Nations. Long may those principles continue to guide our collective journey of peace, prosperity and people-centred development.

What, then, is required of us? The answer is as timeless as it is wise. What is required of is to do justly, to love mercy and to work humbly with our God.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.